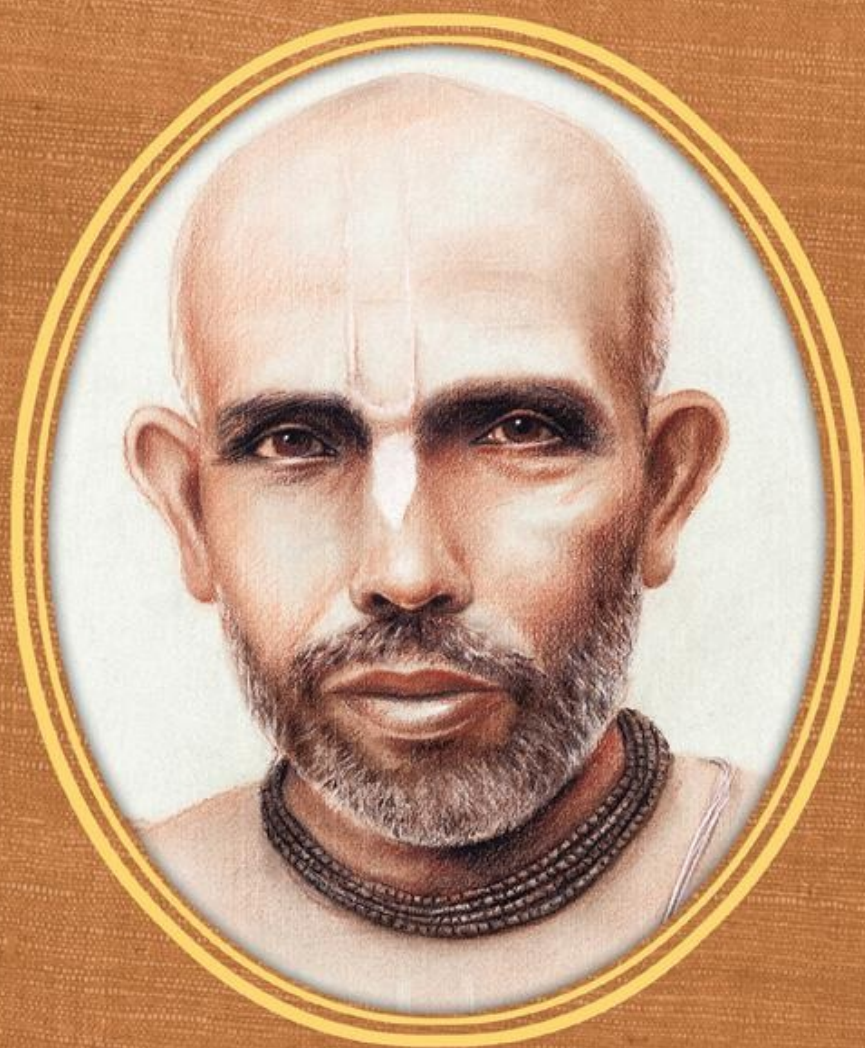


SAMADHI



His Divine Grace

SRILA BHAKTI PROMODE PURI MAHARAJ

Samadhi

By His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Pramoda Puri Goswami Maharaja



A Humble Submission



On the Occasion of the Inauguration of the Samadhi Temple of Nitya-lila-pravista Om Vishnupada Paramahansa 108 Sri Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Goswami Maharaj

by Tridandi Swami B.B. Bodhayan Maharaj President and Acharya of the Gopinath Gaudiya Math

By the general agreement of astrologers and devotees, the date for the inauguration of the newly constructed samadhi temple was set for March 4, 2004.



Today, I cannot help but think back to the day when our Guru Maharaj first began displaying his pastimes of being unwell in order to give us the opportunity to serve him. It was the Ekadasi preceding Nrisingha Chaturdasi in 1999. At that time, I was in South India on a preaching tour. Not much later in that same year, at 2:10 in the morning of the 22nd of Nov Guru Maharaj passed into the divine realm. It was as if the sun had set on the Gopinath Gaudiya Math. It seemed as though the entire world had been plunged into an ocean of pain and was responding by singing Narottam Das' famous hymn of separation:

je ānila prema-dhana karunā pracura hena prabhu kothā gelā ācārya thākura

Where has he gone, my Acharya Thakur, who out of his great mercy brought the world the wealth of love?

My older godbrother, Sripad Gopinath Prabhu, phoned me in America, where I was at the time, to give me the news. I had been feeling somewhat unwell even before receiving the sad tidings of Guru Maharaj's departure, but still it had a tremendous effect on me. I felt as if I had been knocked unconscious. Even so, I immediately remembered the words Guru Maharaj had spoken to me when he was still well: "Baba, when I leave, I want you to take my remains to Mayapur. My spiritual master, my Parama Gurudeva, and most of my godbrothers have all been placed in samadhi in Mayapur. I also want to be buried there." Taking Srila Gurudeva's wish as our command, we had his transcendental remains taken to Sri Mayapur on the very next day, November 23, 1999, which was Rasa Purnima. There, at midday, Srila Guru Maharaj was buried on the grounds of the Gopinath Gaudiya Math in the presence of a large number of sannyasis and devotee householders. We immediately began making plans for the construction of a samadhi temple.

Why do devotees bury the bodies of great saints? In order to understand this, we must first analyze the word *samādhi*, for this is the term that Vaishnavas use to designate the act of burying a saint who has perfected his life in devotion.

The word *samādhi* is derived from the verb root *dhyai*, "to meditate," preceded by *sam*. Expressed differently, it means the renunciation of all bodily and sensual activities to meditate exclusively on one's worshipable deity. When the pure devotee finally closes down all contact with the outer world to be completely absorbed in the eternal pastimes of Radha Krishna, it is said that he has entered samadhi. The place where the spiritual master has been placed in samadhi is the ideal location for a disciple to meditate on him and his instructions and to engage in bhajan. From the transcendental point of view, the spiritual master is always present in his samadhi site. This is why devotees give it special significance by building a temple or samadhi mandir over it. All the devotees of the Gopinath Gaudiya Math and its well-wishers have come together

to construct this temple so that we will have an eternal memorial of our Guru Maharaj, his exemplary life and teachings, where we can be inspired in the life of devotion. It is our prayer that we all remain conscious of his physical presence here and to become motivated to adopt the life of pure devotion that he taught us by his words and example. If we can do so, then all the efforts that have been made toward construction of this temple can be considered a success. Those who have contributed to the building of this samadhi mandir, whether through donations, through physical labor or through preaching, have given individuals like myself the opportunity to remain in constant proximity to our beloved spiritual master, even though we may be devoid of devotion and completely undeserving. I take the dust from their feet and sprinkle it on my head in humble gratitude. I beg you to continuing being merciful to us and give us your blessings, that we may be able to continue following every last unstruction that he has given us, and that we may become qualified to remain his eternal companions, thus making our human birth a success.

These Sanskrit prayers were often chanted by His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Maharaj, either to invoke auspiciousness or bless disciples.

Svasti-Vacanam

by HIS DIVINE GRACE SRILA B.P. PURI MAHARAJ

om visnuh, om visnuh, om visnuh

om tad visnoh paramam padam

sadā paśyanti sūrayo divīva caksur ātatam

tad viprāso vipanyavo jāgrvāmsah samindhate

visnor yat paramam padam

Om. Just as the sun's rays in the sky are extended to the mundane vision, so in the same way the wise and learned devotees always see the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu. Because those highly praiseworthy and spiritually awake Brahmins are able to see the spiritual world, they are also able to reveal that supreme abode of Lord Vishnu. —Rig Veda 1.22.20-21

om apavitraḥ pavitro vā sarvāvasthām gato'pi vā

yah smaret pundarīkāksam sa bāhyābhyantara-suciḥ

Om. Clean or unclean, in whatever state one finds oneself, if one remembers the lotus-eyed Lord Krishna, he becomes both outwardly and inwardly sanctified. —*Garuda Purana*

om suciḥ, om suciḥ, om suciḥ

om svasti no govindah svasti no'cyutānantaḥ

svasti no vāsudevo visnur dadhātu

svasti no nārāyaṇo nara vai

svasti naḥ padmanābhah purusottamo dadhātu

svasti no viśvakseno viśveśvarah

svasti no hrīkeśo harir dadhātu

svasti no vāinateyo hariḥ

svasti no'njanā-suto hanūr bhāgavato dadhātu

svasti svasti su-mangalāḥ keśo mahān

śrī-kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-ghanah sarveśvareśvaro dadhātu

Om. May Lord Govinda bring us auspiciousness. May Achyuta and Ananta Sesha bring us auspiciousness. May Lord Vasudeva Vishnu bring us auspiciousness. May Nara and Narayan bestow auspiciousness on us. May the Supreme Person, Lord Padmanabha, bestow auspiciousness upon us.

May Vishwaksen, the Lord of the universe, bestow auspiciousness upon us. May Garuda and the son of Anjana, the great devotee Hanuman, bestow auspiciousness upon us. May the great and only lord of all benedictions, Sri Krishna, the personification of eternity, knowledge, and bliss, the supreme lord of lords, bestow upon us all prosperity and auspiciousness. —*Krinopanisad*

karotu svasti me krsnah sarva-lokeśvareśvarah

kārsnādayaś ca kurvantu svasti me loka-pāvanāh

May Lord Krishna, the lord of all the gods, the presiding controllers of all the worlds, bestow auspiciousness upon me. May His devotees, the purifiers of the world, bestow all benedictions upon me. —*Sammohana Tantra*

krsno mamaiva sarvatra svasti kuryāt śriyā samam

tathaiva ca sadā kārsnih sarva-vighna-vināśanah

May Lord Krishna along with His beloved Radha bring us prosperity and auspiciousness at all times. May the devotees of Krishna, who are able to destroy all obstacles, similarly bring us eternal benedictions. —*Vishnu-yamala Samhita*

om yam brahma vedānta-vido vadanti

pare pradhānam purusam tathānye

viśvodgateh kāranam īśvaram vā tasmai namo vighna-vināśanāya

Om. Obeisances unto the destroyer of all obstacles, whom the knowers of Vedanta describe as the Supreme Brahman, and who others describe as the *pradhāna*, or totality of the material elements. Some describe Him as the supreme person, or purusa, while others describe Him as the Supreme Lord and the cause of the creation of the universe

—*Vishnu Purana*

om krsno vai sac-cid-ānanda-ghanah

krsna ādi-purusah krsnah purusottamah

krsno ha u karmādi-mūlam krsnah sa ha

sarvaih kāryah krsnah kāśam

krd ādhiśo mukhyah prabhuh

pūjyah krsno'nādis tasminn ajāndāntar-bāhye

yan mangalam tal labhate krtī

Om. Lord Krishna is the embodied form of eternity, bliss and cognizance. Krishna is the original person. Krishna is the supreme person. Krishna alone is the original source of all activities. Krishna alone is the goal of everyone's activities. Krishna is the one and only Lord of all. Krishna is the most worshipable Lord, the best of gods. Krishna is without any beginning. The capable person finds whatever benedictions exist, whether within or without this universe, in Krishna alone.

—*Krishna Upanisad, Rig Veda*

sarvatraiva tesām jayah kutas tesām parābhavah

yesām indīvara-śyāmah hrdaya-sthah janārdanah

Those in whose heart Janardana, the blue-lotus-hued Lord, resides are victorious everywhere. Where do they ever encounter defeat?

jaya janārdana! jaya janārdana! jaya janārdana!

om mādhave mādhave vāci

mādhave madhave hrđi

smaranti sādhave sarve sarva-kāryesu mādhave

Om. May Madhava and only Madhava be in our words! May Madhava and only Madhava be in our hearts. The saintly remember Lord Madhava, the husband of the goddess of fortune, in all their undertakings. —*Nrisingha Purana*

śrī-krsna-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vrnda

hare krsna hare krsna krsna krsna hare hare hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare śrī-nrsimha,

jaya nrsimha, jaya jaya nrsimha prahlādeśa jaya padmā-mukha-padma-bhrnga

All glories to Lord Nrisingha, master of Prahlada! Victory to Lord Nrisingha! All glories, all glories to Lord Nrisingha, whose eyes are like bees in the lotus face of Lakshmi, the goddess the lotus garden.

namas te narasimhāya prahlādāhlāda-dāyine

hiranyakaśīpor vaksahśilātanka-nakhālaye

I bow down to Lord Nrisingha, the giver of joy to Prahlada. I bow down to Him whose claws tear into the stone-like chest of Hiranyakashipu.

vāg-īśā yasya vadane laksmir yasya ca vaksasi

yasyāste hrdaye samvit tam nrsimham aham bhaje

I worship Lord Nrisingha, on whose tongue dances the Goddess of Speech, on whose chest cavorts the Goddess of Fortune, and in whose heart resides the spiritual energy of consciousness.

ito nrsimha parato nrsimha yato yato yāmi tato nrsimha

bahir nrsimha hrdaye nrsimha nrsimham ādim śaranam prapadye

Lord Nrisingha is here, Lord Nrisingha is there. Wherever I go, there is Lord Nrisingha. Nrisingha is outside of me, He is within me. I surrender to Nrisingha Deva, the original refuge.

om namo bhagavate tubhyam

purusāya mahātmane haraye'dbhuta-simhāya

brahmane paramātmane

Om. I bow down to You, O Lord, O Great Soul, O Supreme Person! I bow down to You, O Hari, O amazing lion, O Supreme Brahman, O Supreme Soul.

om namo bhagavate narasimhāya namas tejas-tejase

āvir-āvirbhava vajra-nakha vajra-damstra karmāśayān

randhaya randhaya tamo grasa grasa

om svāhā abhayam abhayam ātmani bhūyisthā

om ksraum, om ksraum, om ksraum

Om, I bow down to Lord Nrisingha. I bow down to Him who has the brilliance of fire. Please appear, please appear to me. You whose claws are hard as thunderbolts, whose teeth are likened to thunderbolts! Please destroy the desires that perpetuate my entanglement in karma. Swallow up the darkness of

my ignorance, swallow up my darkness. Om Svaha. Give me fearlessness in my heart, give me fearlessness.

Om ksraum, Om ksraum, Om ksraum.

—SB 5.18.8

jaya nrsimha-deva! jaya pabhupāda!

Chanting Inattentively



Chapter 12 of Harinama Chintamani

by Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur



jaya jaya mahāprabhu jaya bhakta-gana jāndera asāde kari nāma-sankīrtana

All glories to Lord Gaurachandra, who has descended to propagate the Holy Name! All glories to the Holy Name, the essence of all spiritual teaching!

The offense known as *pramada* or inattentive chanting

haridāsa bale prabhu hethā sanātane āra ta gopāla bhatta daksina bhramane

śikhāile apramāde śrī-kṛṣṇa-bhājana pramāḍake aparādhe karile ganana

Hari Das said: O Lord, to Srila Sanatan Goswami here in Jagannath Puri and to Srila Gopala Bhatta Goswami while wandering in South India, You taught that one must worship the Lord without being distracted; You thus counted inattentiveness amongst the offenses in chanting.

Bhaktivinode's comment:

Mahaprabhu instructed Sanatan Goswami:

eka anga sādhe keha sādhe bahu anga nisthā haite upajaya premera taranga Whether a person executes only one or many of the processes of devotional service, the waves of love of Godhead will arise if he or she practices with fixed determination or nishtha. —CC 2.22.130

The nishtha spoken of here is achieved by giving up inattentiveness in chanting.

anya aparādha tyaji sadā nāma laya tabu nāme prema nāhi haya ta udaya Some people give up all the offenses and chant constantly, but still do not experience the awakening of prema. *tabe jāni pramāda nāmete aparādha prema bhakti sādhanete kariteche bādha* When I see this, I know that the offense of inattentiveness is interfering with their attainment of prema bhakti.

The meaning of pramada is inattentiveness

pramāda anavadhāna ei mūla artha ihā haite ghate prabhu sakala anartha The root meaning of *pramāda* is inattentiveness;^{1[1]} from it arise all the

Three kinds of inattention

audāsīnya jādya āra viksepa e tina prakāra anavadhāna bujhibe pravīna

The wise should know that there are three kinds of inattention; indifference (*audāsīnya*), lethargy (*jādyā*) and distractedness (*viksepa*).

Until one develops enthusiasm *for* chanting, one should be especially careful

kona bhāgye kona jīvera śraddhā yadi haya tabe tinha harināma grahana karaya

One who by good fortune develops faith takes up the chanting of the Holy Name.

yatna kari smare nāma sankhyāra sahita tabe nāme anurāga haya ta udita

One who carefully chants the fixed number of Holy Names while meditating will quickly develop an enthusiasm for chanting.

One should chant the Maha Mantra keeping count on a rosary made of tulasi beads. One will feel when it is time to increase the number of rounds chanted.

ye paryanta anurāga nā haya udaya se paryanta yatna kari nāma sadā laya

As long as one does not have such enthusiasm, one should take care to constantly chant the Holy Name with attention.

One who *is* careless cannot fix his mind

nisargatah loka saba visaye āsakta smṛti-kāle visaya antare anurakta

All people are conditioned to be attached to the sense objects, so even while meditating on the Holy Name, their minds flit from one object to another.

ruci yāya anya sthāne nāme udāsīna nāme citta magna nahe jape pratidina

When one's taste is for something else, one becomes indifferent to the Holy Name; thus even though he chants every day, his mind is not absorbed in the name of Hari.

citta eka dike āra anya dike nāma tāhāra mangala kise haya guna dhāma

The mind goes off in one direction, while the Name is in another. How then can he benefit, O most virtuous Lord?

lakṣa nāma haile pūrṇa saṅkhyā mālā gani hrdaye nahila rasa bindu guna manī

Such a devotee completes chanting a lakh of Names on his japa mala, but, O Lord, he does not get a drop of the ecstatic taste of the Holy Name.

ei ta anavadhāna dosera prakāra visayī hrdaye prabhu bada durnivāra

This is the result of inattentiveness while chanting, O Lord. This flaw is difficult to eradicate from hearts attached to sense objects.

The rules for chanting carefully

sādhū sange svalpa kāla chādiyā visaya nirjane la-ile nāma ei dosa ksaya

Giving up all sense objects, spend some time in the company of Vaishnavas, then chant the Holy Name in a secluded place to eradicate the above flaw.

At first one should begin by chanting for half an hour in such a secluded environment. By chanting or meditating in the company of advanced Vaishnavas, one can see their mood; then, by emulating it, one will be motivated to give up his indifference to the Holy Name.²[\[2\]](#)

krame krame krsna nāma citta haya sthira nirantara nāma rase haya ta adhīra

Gradually the Holy Name will take a permanent place in the chanter's mind, until he loses his composure through submersion in the sweetness of the Holy Name.

tulasīra sannikate krsna līlā sthāne sādhu sannidhāne basi' sātvata-vidhāne

Vaishnava custom holds that chanting is best performed in the presence of Tulasi Devi, in a place of Lord Krishna's pastimes, or in the association of saintly devotees.

The words used here for Vaishnava custom are *sātvata-vidhāna*, which means the system discovered by the Vaishnavas who have enjoyed worshiping the Lord. At first they chant just half an hour a day, then gradually double this time and then double it again. They gradually increase the amount of chanting to a lakh of Names per day, and then to three lakhs a day.

Such increases take place naturally as one develops a taste for chanting.

krame kāla vrddhi kari sei nāma smare ati śīghra visayera chanda ha-ite tare

Gradually, the devotee increases the amount of time spent meditating on the Holy Name and quickly breaks free from his inclination to the sense objects.

Another way *to* overcome inattention arising *from* apathy

athavā nirjane basi’ smari sādhu-rīti indriya pidhāna kari’ nāme kare mati

Alternatively, one can sit alone and remember the way saints do their bhajan. By keeping the senses covered, one can fix the mind on the Holy Name.

“Keeping the senses covered” can mean either chanting while sitting in an isolated room with the door closed, or with the eyes and head covered with a cloth.

satvare nāmete nisthā ruci krame haya audāsīnya dose tāra krame haya ksaya

This leads to a determined commitment to chanting, then enjoyment of the Name, whereby the offense of apathetic indifference will gradually vanish.

Characteristics *of* indifference arising *from* lethargy

jādye ye anavadhānaa alasera mane tāhe ruci nāhi haya śrī-nāma-grahane

The inattention arising from lethargy (*jādyā*) refers to the laziness of mind that prevents one from relishing the nectar of the Holy Name.

smṛti-kāle punah śīghra virāme prayāsa ei dose nāma-rasa nā haya prakāśa

When meditating on the Holy Name, the lazy person quickly gives up trying, and this lack of effort prevents him from getting a taste for the Holy Name.

anya kārye vrthā kāla nā haya yāpana sādhu gana ihā cinti' smare anuksana

Saintly devotees are afraid to waste even a moment in non-devotional activities, and so use every available minute in chanting and remembering.

This quality is called *avyartha kālatvam*, which is a characteristic of the devotee who has attained the stage of *bhāva* (See *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.3.14).

nāma smare rase maje anya nāhi cāya

sei rūpa sādhu sange ei dosa yāya

Meditating on the Name and absorbed in its rasa, they want for nothing. This flaw disappears when one remains in such devotional association.

anvesiyā sei rūpa sādhu-sanga kare tad-anukarane citta jādyā parihare

So search out devotees of this quality and stay in their company, then emulate their behavior and give up lethargy.

It is very difficult to find a pure and saintly devotee. One may have to travel

far and wide to find suitable devotional association.

avyartha kālatva dharma sādharma carita dekhile tāhāte ruci ha-ibe niścita

It is the sadhu's nature to not misuse even a moment's time; when an aspirant sees such conduct, he is sure to be delighted by it.

mane habe āhā kabe ihāra samāna smariba gāiba nāma haye bhāgyavān

He will think, "Ah! When can I be like this great soul? When will I be fortunate enough to chant and remember Krishna like him?"

sei ta utsāha āsi alasera mane jādya dūra kare krsna-nāmera smarane

Such thoughts bring enthusiasm into the mind of even the most lethargic aspirant, and inspire him to rid himself of his laziness in remembering the names of the Lord.

mane habe āja laksa nāma ye kariba krame krame tina laksa nāma ye smariba

He will thus begin to resolve, "Today I will chant a lakh of Names, and it won't be long before I can meditate on three lakhs every day."

mahāgraha habe citte nāmera sankhyāya acire yāibe jādya sādharma krpāya

He will then have great eagerness for chanting his fixed number of Names daily, and thus, by the grace of the Vaishnavas, will overcome lethargic chanting.

Overcoming scattered-mindedness (*viksepa*)

viksepa ha-ite yei pramāda udaya bahu yatne sei aparādha haya ksaya

The kind of inattention that results from scattered-mindedness is an offense that can only be overcome only by making a great effort.

kanaka kāmīnī āra jaya parājaya pratisthāsā sāthya-vrtti tāhāra nilaya

The sources of *viksepa* lie in wealth and women, victories won or defeats

suffered, from the desire for power and prestige, or from profits dishonestly gained.

e saba ākrsti hrde ha-ile udaya nāmete anavadhāna svabhāvatah haya

When anxieties born of these sources tug on the mind, one naturally becomes inattentive to the Holy Name.

How to overcome such distractedness

krame krame sei saba cintā parihāre yatibe saubhāgyavān vaisnava ācāre

One by one, the fortunate aspirant must abandon all these thoughts and make a concerted effort to take up the Vaishnava style of life.

prathamete hari-dine bhoga-cintā tyaji’ sādhu sange rātra-dina harināma bhaji

He should begin by giving up thoughts of sense enjoyment on holy days like Ekadasi,^{3[3]} spending the entire day and night chanting the Holy Name in the company of devotees.

hari-ksetre hari dāsa hari śāstre laye utsave majibe sukhe parama nirbhaye

Then, in a place associated with Krishna, with Krishna’s servants and Krishna’s scriptures, he should fearlessly immerse himself in the blissful Ekadasi celebrations.

“Places associated with Krishna” means holy lands such as Nabadwip, Vrindavan, or Jagannath Puri. “Krishna’s servants” refers to pure devotees in the line of Rupa Goswami. “Krishna’s scriptures” are the Upanishads, the Gita, Bhagavatam and any other books discussing Vaishnava siddhanta.

krame bhakti-kāla mana karibe vardhana hari-kathā mahotsave majāiyā mana

Gradually, the aspirant will spend more and more time in acts of devotion, absorbing the mind in a festival of joy, discussing Krishna’s philosophy and pastimes.

śrestha rasa krame citte ha-ibe udaya jadera nikrsta rasa chādibe niścaya

Then the superior taste of Krishna devotion will arise within him and he will give up the inferior taste of material pleasures.

mahājana mukhe hari-sangīta śravane mugdha habe manah karna rasa āsvādane nikrsta visaya-sprhā ha-ibe vigata nāma gāne citta sthira habe avirata

On listening to the songs of Krishna written by the Mahajans, one’s ears and mind will be enchanted by the nectar, the inferior tastes of material sense enjoyment will then be dislodged and the mind fixed in the singing of the Holy Name.

ataeva bahu yatne e pramāda tyaje sthira citte nāma rase cira dina maje

One should therefore take great care to give up the fault of inattention, and absorb himself with singular fixity in the nectar of the Holy Name.

Eagerness

sankalpita nāma sankhyā pūrṇa karibāre nā haya ayatna nāme dekhi bāre bāre

I always take care not to neglect completing the number of Names I have vowed to chant. I see to this regularly, without fail.

Those who have a tendency to inattention due to scattered-mindedness generally attempt to complete their fixed number as quickly as possible. As one chants, one should repeatedly pay attention that such carelessness does not arise.

satarka ha-iyā kari nāma sankīrtana pramāda chādiyā kari nāmera bhajana

I chant the Holy Names with great attention; casting inattentiveness aside, I engage in bhajan.

sankhyādhika sprhā ekāgra-mānase nirantara kari' nāma tava krpā-bale

Giving up the singular ambition to simply increase my numbers, I constantly chant the Holy Name in the awareness that I do so by Your mercy.

One should take care to improve the quality of his chanting rather than try to increase the quantity.

ei krpā kara prabhu nāmete pramāda nā bādhe āmāra citte nāma rasāsvāda

Please be merciful to me, O Lord, that the offense of inattention in chanting never blocks my ability to relish the divine flavors of the Holy Name.

The secret to success

ekāgra mānase nirjanete svalpa ksana nāma smṛti abhyāsa karibe bhakta jana

The devotee should spend a little time alone in a quiet place and practice concentrating deeply on the Holy Name.

ataeva spasta nāma bhāva lagna mane sadā haya e prārthanā tomāra carane

Therefore I pray constantly at Your lotus feet to be able to always utter each Name distinctly and to meditating upon them with feeling.

āpana yatnete keha nāhi pāre tomāra prasāda vinā e bhava-ssamsāre

Simply by one's own efforts, no one in this material world can overcome distractedness. Such a victory can only come by Your merciful blessings.

It is impossible for any jiva to singlehandedly overcome inattentiveness by his personal efforts. By Your mercy, however, O Lord, it can be accomplished with ease. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to beg for Your grace with great humility, for this is the only means to attain salvation from this offense.

The only way to avoid this offense

yatna kari krpā māgi vyākula antare tumi krpāmaya krpā kara atahpare

I take great care to beg for Your mercy, my heart overcome with emotion, knowing that You are all-merciful and will always be generous with Your blessings.

tava krpā lābhe yadi nā kari yatana tabe āmi bhāgya hīna he śacīnandana

If I make no effort to attain Your mercy, O Sachinandan, then I will remain ever unfortunate.

Those who attempt to take up chanting the Holy Name on the strength of their own individual intelligence and material wealth will never attain success. Lord Krishna’s mercy is the basis of all perfection. Thus one who does not make every effort to obtain the Lord’s mercy is indeed a very unfortunate soul. To conclude this chapter, it is worth remembering Mahāprabhu’s instructions to all humanity about chanting and meditating on the Holy Name with full attention.

These are found in the *Chaitanya Bhagavata*, Madhya 23.75-78:

*āpane sabāre prabhu kare upadeśe kṛṣṇa-nāma mahā-mantra śunaha
harise hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare hare rāma hare rāma rāma
rāma hare hare prabhu kahe kahilām ei mahā-mantra ihā giye japa sadā
kariyā nirbandha ihā haite sarva-siddhi haibe sabāra sarva-ksana bala
ithe vidhi nāhi āra*

The Lord spoke the following instruction to all His students: “Listen joyfully to the great mantra composed of Krishna’s names:

*hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma
hare hare*

The Lord continued, “I have spoken the Maha Mantra. Now go ahead and chant it, being sure to take a vow to repeat it a fixed number of times every day. All perfections will come to you from chanting the Holy Name. Chant always; there is no other rule to follow. —*Cbh* 2.23.75-78

The word *nirbandha* in verse 77 needs elaboration. Though the word itself has va

meanings, in this context, it refers to the contract one makes to chant a specific number of Maha Mantras per day. The sadhaka should chant the Maha Mantra of sixteen names and thirty-two syllables once on each bead of a japa mala of 108 tulasi beads. Four rounds on the beads is called a grantha. By gradually increasing his chanting, the sadhaka should aspire to fix his chanting at sixteen granthas or one lakha of Holy Names. If chanting is then even further increased to three lakhs of names, the devotee will be immersed in the Lord's Holy Name for every moment of the day. All previous acharyas and Mahajans followed this instruction of Lord Chaitanya and attained perfection. It is still possible today for anyone to attain perfection by chanting in this way. Everyone from the liberated soul to the salvationist and the materialistic person are eligible to chant the Holy Name of the Lord. Different moods of Krishna prema are visible in the liberated souls, both that of meeting the Lord and that of suffering the pangs of separation from the Lord. In either of these moods, the nectar of the Holy Name is fully relishable.

hari-nāma-cintāmani alankāra yāra hari-dāsa-pada-yuga bharasā tāhāra

Bhaktivinode, who takes pleasure in serving the servant of Hari Das, though

devoid of any qualification, recites this Harināma-cintāmani.

Srila Prabhupada's Instructions

Taken from *Prabhupādera Upadeśāmṛta*,

Edited by Bhakti Mayukh Bhagavata Maharaj, Sri Gauranga Math, Raipur

By Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

What is *the* “sad-dharma” or true religion?

The true religion is the Bhagavata Dharma, the religion of devotion and service to the Supreme Lord. Service to the Lord and service to His devotees together make up the true religion. Any religious activity other than this is superficial—temporary and related to the non-self. The true religion, devotion to the Supreme Lord, is the one true activity of the soul. We become truly egalitarian in our vision when we see that everyone is factually engaged in the service of the Lord. At that moment, we stop making distinctions between superior or inferior. When we wholeheartedly follow the path to peace, then the beneficial result we attain is nothing other than service to the Lord. Devotion to the Lord alone is the eternal religion, our supreme duty. It is the activity of the soul. Without devotion, the life of the living entity is meaningless. Any activity other than devotion is simply an effort to become the Lord oneself. Bhakti is thus ranged against all other religious activities—*jnana*, *karma*, *yoga* or other desires—all of which are just different ways of seeking lordship. The chanting of the Holy Names is the supreme form of the true religion or Bhagavata Dharma.

There is no medicine for the material disease superior to the name of Krishna.

Are karma and jnana activities of the soul?

No. It is not a necessity of the soul to be either a ritualist or a philosopher. Neither karma nor jnana are the fundamental activities of the spirit soul. Because the jiva is constitutionally the Lord's servant, service to Him is his eternal nature.

jīvera svarūpa haya kṛsnera nitya dāsa.

Karmis and jnanis are concerned with their own selfish interests, their own personal happiness. They are not devotees, but non-devotees. That is why the truly pious and fortunate do not become karmis or jnanis, but take to the path of devotion.

Please define Sri Krishna Sankirtan

The three words *śrī-kṛṣṇa- sankīrtanam* should be understood as follows.

Śrī refers to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Fortune. In this context, however, it indicates the supreme Goddess of Fortune, the one who is the source of all other such goddesses, namely Srimati Radharani, or Gandharvika. As such, when we say *śrī- kṛṣṇa*, we are talking about the Divine Couple, Gandharvika united with Her beloved Giridhari, the son of King Nanda. The word sankirtan is defined by Jiva Goswami as *bahubhir militvā kīrtanam tad eva sankīrtanam* —“Sankirtan means the glorification of the Lord by many people together” (Bhakti-sandarbha 269). Another definition understands *sam* to mean *samyak* or “complete.” Thus sankirtan would mean the complete glorification of Sri Krishna, His name, form, attributes, associates, and pastimes.

Is nama sankirtan *the* topmost spiritual practice?

It most certainly is. In the age of Kali, the chanting of the Holy Names is not just the topmost spiritual practice, it is the only spiritual practice, the only spiritual practice, the only spiritual practice. In the age of Kali, there is no method of attaining spiritual realization outside the chanting of the Holy Names. Through the Holy Name, we can attain all perfections. Lord Chaitanya says in the Chaitanya Charitamrita—

harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā

The Holy Name, the Holy Name, the Holy Name alone! In this age of Kali, there is no other refuge, no other refuge, no other refuge.

kali-kāle nāma rūpe kṛṣṇa avatāra nāma haite haya sarva jagata nistāra

In the age of Kali, Krishna appears in the form of His name. All the world will attain salvation through the Holy Name.

dārdhya lāgi harer nāma ukti tina bāra jada loka bujhāite punah eva-kāra

For the sake of emphasis, Narada’s verse repeats the words *harer nāma* three times. Then, just to make it clear for the really dull, it stresses those words with the word *eva* [“certainly”].

kevala-śabde punar api niścaya-karana jūāna-yoga-tapakarma-ādi nivārana

This assertion is further strengthened by the use of the word *kevala* [“alone”] which prohibits all other processes, such as cultivation of knowledge, practice of mystic yoga, the performance of austerities or fruitive activities.

anyathā je māne tāra nāhika nistāra nāhi nāhi nāhi e tina eva-kāra

Then, just to make sure it is clear that no one who disregards this teaching will achieve salvation, the words “there is no other way” are repeated thrice. —
CC 1.17.21-5

Elsewhere it is said,

nāma vinā kali kāle nahe āra dharma sarva-mantra-sāra nāma ei śāstra

marma

In the age of Kali, we have no religious duty other than chanting the Holy Name. The scriptural conclusion is that the Name is the essence of all the Vedic hymns. —CC 1.7.74

*bhajanera madhye śrestha nava-vidhā bhakti kṛṣṇa-prema kṛṣṇa dite dhare
mahā-śakti tāra madhye sarva-śrestha nāma-sankīrtana niraparādhe laile
nāma pāya prema-dhana*

Of the many ways of executing devotional service, nine are considered to be the best, for they possess the greatest capacity to deliver love for Krishna and thus Krishna Himself. Of these nine processes of devotional service, the most important is the chanting of the Lord's Holy Name, for if one chants without committing offenses he will obtain the treasure of love for the Lord. —
CC 3.4.70-1

The chanting of the Holy Name is the best of the sixty-four different methods of worshiping Krishna. It is the supreme means for attaining all auspiciousness. All the nine principal devotional activities are contained within the practice of Nama sankirtan. The Supreme Lord Himself appeared as Gauranga Deva in order to show that the Holy Name is the only means for attaining spiritual perfection. All benefits accrue to one who chants the Holy Name. But there is one thing we must bear in mind—if you are going to chant, you must first listen. The chanting of Krishna's holy names is the best of all spiritual processes. Through the worship of the Holy Name, the soul can attain all perfections. We have no other duty than chanting the Holy Name in the company of saintly devotees. The message of the Srimad Bhagavatam is Harinam Sankirtan. Even the liberated souls have no other business than chanting the Holy Name. When one utters the Holy Name, one is surrendering himself to its lotus feet. From the moment a practitioner attains success in the chanting of his mantra, the Holy Name dances unceasingly on his tongue. There is no benefit in making a pretense of bhajan while avoiding the service of the devotees who are living in the math and have dedicated themselves to chanting the Name. The math is the place where all the elements necessary for serving the Lord are concentrated. One becomes eligible for chanting the Holy Name by serving the residents of the math. Through such service, one's taste for chanting increases. If, on the other hand, we reject such service and remain absorbed in the service of friends and relatives who have no interest in the devotional life, we will soon stop chanting the Holy Name. If we are indifferent to the service of the Supreme Lord, the spiritual master and the Vaishnavas and apply ourselves uniquely to the service of our families, we will never become fixed on the Holy Name. It was to fix us in the chanting that the Supreme Lord Gaurasundara, the combined form of Sri Sri Radha and Krishna,

appeared in this world. If we do not take heed of His teaching and remain indifferent to the Holy Name, then we will never experience true beatitude. The topmost means for attaining Krishna is to chant the Holy Name. If we take up any other practice, it can be considered a means for attaining Krishna only if it is used as a way of supporting the chanting of the Holy Name. Otherwise they do nothing more than interfere with our progress. The chanting of the Holy Name is the emperor of all spiritual practices. It is the only unfailing means of realizing all our goals. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu made no effort to inculcate the practice of Deity worship, but

concentrated exclusively on teaching the chanting of the Holy Names in His *Śikṣā*; other devotional practices are recommended, it is only with the accompaniment of chanting:

yadyapi anya-bhaktih kalau kartavyā tadā tatsamyogenaiva kartavyā

(Bhakti-sandarbha 274)

Krishna and His name are not two different things. Krishna *is* His name, and the Name *is* Krishna. They are non-different. The Holy Name *is* the son of Nanda Maharaj; the Holy Name *is* the beautiful blackish boy of Vrindavan. So we will be truly well-served if we conclude that the chanting of the Holy Name is our only duty or abhidheya.

Is chanting krishna's names *the* only spiritual practice?

Most certainly. The living entity has no other duty than worshiping the Lord. No one seems able to understand this. It does not matter whether you are young or old, illiterate or scholarly, man or woman, rich or poor, foolish or brilliant, saint or sinner; there is no other means for attaining perfection, no spiritual practice other than chanting Krishna's holy name.

Do we have *to* personally perform devotional service?

Every one of us must become a servant of the Supreme Lord, who lies beyond our sense perception. We cannot serve the Lord through a priest or some other proxy. In some religious sects, we see that a single spokesman performs the worship while the rest of the congregation stands by and watches. But this is not the way that true service is performed. We have to be personally engaged in service in accordance with the directions of the spiritual master. This means associating with devotees, chanting the Holy Name, hearing discussions about Krishna, serving the Lord's deity forms and so on. But we will not gain any real benefit if we only mimic their performance. If self-surrender is not at their basis, then such devotional activities are nothing more than an external performance, a pretense.

Whatever wealth or riches come to us through the will of God are meant to be used in His service. If we are miserly or lax in our service and simply hoard this money, it will not be long before we have to face many difficulties. People often come to me and ask me to establish a permanent temple or math in their area. I will do nothing of the sort, however. If someone has a genuine desire to serve the Lord, if his life is turned toward the Lord and he has genuinely taken shelter of the Lord, then there will be no obstacles to his service to the Lord's deity form. He will be able to preach Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's message fearlessly. Otherwise, everything will go to perdition. We have to study the question of personal and universal welfare carefully. We are not going to be in this world for long, but if we are engaged in the chanting of the Holy Name or in the Lord's service when our bodies drop, then our lives will have been a success. We have not come into the world to be mere carpenters or bricklayers. We are the menial letter-carriers of Lord Chaitanya's message.

Is it true that life without bhajan has no value whatsoever?

Yes. If one does not engage in Krishna bhajan, then there is no point in eating, there is no point in drinking. If on attaining this human body, which is unattainable even by the gods, one does not engage in the service of Krishna, it is a misfortune that could last for lifetimes.

krsna bhajibāra tare samsāra āinu miche māyāya baddha haye vrksa-sama

hainu

I have taken birth in this world to worship Krishna, but instead I have been captured by Maya and become no better than a tree.

Lower creatures get the opportunity to serve Krishna only after becoming human beings. But if we, as humans, imitate the animals and do nothing but eat, drink and make merry, or make a pretense of worshiping Krishna while remaining attached to the senses and sense objects, then we are simply wasting our lives. Even though we have taken birth in the human form of life, we have gained nothing.

What is a devotee's way of thinking?

A liberated person has no desire for liberation. Devotees are liberated. Therefore they have no desire for religiosity, material success, sense gratification or salvation. Devotion alone is happiness. This is why devotees alone are truly happy. All others lack peace and are thus unhappy. Since they have no devotion, those who follow the path of works, philosophers, yogis, hedonists and renunciates alike are all lacking peace. The path they follow is based on what we call *anyābhilāsa*—the desire for something other than Krishna.

They think, “I want happiness, and if everyone else is inconvenienced, so be it.” One who follows the path of exclusive devotion thinks, “I shall stop deceiving people and engage in glorifying the Holy Names with other devotees, twenty four hours a day.” In this path of exclusive devotion, the admixture of no other practice is admitted. The reason for this is *kirtan* is the only independent and unfailing spiritual practice.

In the beginning we must listen attentively. Then we have to engage all the senses in activities that are conducive to spiritual life. This leads to the ability to see the Lord's form, attributes, associates, uniqueness and pastimes. Devotees who adopt this way of thinking make progress on the path of spiritual evolution.

Is honesty a necessary virtue?

We have to be honest. Cheating, deception and character assassination must all be rigorously rejected. But don't try to pass either stupidity or hypocrisy off as honesty. True sincerity and seeming sincerity are no more compatible than true punctuality and seeming punctuality. The saintly and the wicked do not have the same standards. If at any time in the course of a 24-hour day you want give up talking about Krishna for any other subject, then you will be taking a break from bhajan.

Please explain to us the meaning of service

The servants of Lord Hari appeal to everyone: "O spirit soul! Serve the Lord. Do not do anything else. Don't engage in sense gratification in the name of service to Him, for service to Krishna means pleasing His senses. Service does not mean activities meant for the satisfaction of your own senses, or activities meant to bring happiness to your friends and relatives, all of whom are indifferent to the Lord. If you think that these things are service, you are deceiving yourself. Don't make the mistake of thinking that service to your household is the same thing as serving God. Take shelter of Krishna and stop wasting your time in the service of Maya, where with each passing day your attachment to mundane family life grows. You will never attain God in this way. Preoccupy yourself with the service of the Lord and in that way you will attain Him." Do you think it is devotional service to Krishna to say, "I offer Krishna the puffed rice that has blown away" (*uro khoi krsnāya namah*)? In other words, do you think that devotional service can be conducted as an afterthought? If you think you can trick Krishna, you only trick yourself. That is why I tell you to be clever. Trick everyone else and serve Krishna. This will please the Lord who dwells in your heart.

Is it wrong to think that taking care of our household affairs is the same as se

Indeed it is. The home is a place for sense enjoyment, whereas the math is a place where everyone is engaged in serving the Lord. This is why service to the household cannot be called service to Krishna. Of course, if one can engage in *bhajan* at home, then the difference between the two is eradicated. And if one does not engage in *bhajan*, then Maya will come to you no matter where you are and create further obstacles to devotion. If one thinks that simply taking care of his household business is the same as serving Krishna, he cannot expect to achieve true well-being. As long as one thinks of one's own parents, wife or children as one's own, or as being directly connected to one's essential being, service to Krishna is an impossibility. One becomes entangled and makes the approbation of family members the goal of his life. But as the saying goes, "Who is truly father to whom? And who is truly anyone's son?" If we lose this higher consciousness, then the inauspicious cycle of repeated birth and death is inevitable. After taking initiation, if we continue to believe that the service to our parents, wife and children, country or social class, or any such mundane relation, is favorable to our prosecution of Krishna consciousness, or if we think that they are equal to service to Krishna, this means that we have forgotten the meaning of such service. We should put aside this kind of wandering or wavering spirit and associate with devotees who are a living source of spiritual nourishment. If we don't, our attachment to our relatives, the bondage of love for our children, and the joys of conjugal life will keep us away from the Lord's *bhajan*. The danger is that we will start wanting nothing other than the peace and happiness of family life. The idea that service to home and family are the same as service to Krishna is the fruit of bad association. If one wants to be free of such confused misconceptions, he should seek the association of Krishna's devotees and listen to the holy scriptures from them.

How should we deal *with the* sense objects?

We should use the sense objects appropriately, without getting into excessive indulgence. But neither should we cause undue suffering to the body, which is a road leading to suicide. We must lead a life that is conducive to chanting the glories of the Lord. There is no possibility of achieving auspiciousness without rendering service to the transcendental sound. This is why the Vedanta says *anārttīh śabdāt anāvṛttīh śabdāt*

—“Liberation comes from the divine word.” The fact is that through chanting Lord Krishna’s name, we please His senses. By satisfying the senses of the conditioned souls, we bring no real benefit to anyone, individually or collectively. So we should maintain the body uniquely for the sake of serving Lord Hari.

What is the point of maintaining it just for sense pleasures? It will only lead to a hellish existence. So we should only deal with the sense objects to the extent that they allow us to serve the Lord. No more, no less.

How should we show respect *to* others?

Devotees are not favorable to showing respect to any person without taking into account their relationship with Krishna. They recognize that every living entity in this world is a residence for the Lord, who is present within them as the indwelling Supersoul. So whether they have taken a human, godly or some other form, the devotee sees them as servants of the Lord and offers them respect. This is why Mahaprabhu says,

uttama haūā vaisnava habe nirabhimāna jīve sammāna dibe jāni’ krsna adhisthāna

Though a Vaishnava is the best of all people, he is always free of pride. He gives respect to all creatures, knowing that Krishna resides within them. —
CC 3.20.22

Who should we consider *to* be a non-devotee *or* non-vaishnava?

Those who constantly serve Vishnu are known as Vaishnavas. Those whose duty it is to worship Vishnu but do not are called non-Vaishnavas. Those who instead of hearing about Vishnu prefer to hear and discuss other subjects, whose primary concern is for worldly pleasures and comforts are called

nonVaishnavas. Our eternal duty is to hear and discuss the topics of Vishnu. We are to follow the leadership of the spiritual master and the Vaishnavas. We are to always take the Lord's remnants as His grace. If we are deprived of this kind of mercy and allow ourselves to be preoccupied by other kinds of work, we become nonVaishnavas. Once we have become non-Vaishnavas, we come face-to-face with a whole set of problems and sufferings related to this world. The one and only cause of suffering is aversion to God. We suffer because, out of a false sense of independence, we would rather do anything other than engage in the Lord's service. Rather than serving the Lord, we try to find ways to be served by others. And this is the basis of all our actions. We identify ourselves as the doer for this purpose alone. These kinds of self-perceptions arise out of our refusal to accept our identity as Krishna's servant. We are swallowed up by the idea that we are the doer, the enjoyer, the observer, or the one who sets things into motion. If we are fortunate enough to come into contact with a Vaishnava saint, we can learn that we are not the doers or controllers, or the objects of service, but that we are servants of God. God is the one and only true object of service. Those who are on the path of works are called "doers." We want to perform good works and be loved by the entire world. We busily do our worldly duties as best we can so that our family members will hold us dear. Unfortunately, all these efforts will bring us neither peace nor the ultimate good; it will not free us from our entanglement in the material nature. Therefore, the Lord's devotee mercifully tells us that our only duty is to serve the Lord's lotus feet. It is the duty of all living beings—from gods and humans to the birds and beasts—to serve the Lord. But most of us are inattentive to the words of the devotees and so we think, "I am a rock and am doing the work of a rock. I am a tree and am doing the work of distributing my fruit." Or, "I am a father, so I must serve my sons and daughters. I must arrange for their futures. As a human being, there are so many things that I must do—I must become educated, I must become civilized, I must work to build and improve society and the nation. I will live in my family and become the boss. People will respect me... I'll drive around in a chauffeur-driven limousine. I will marry off my sons and daughters."

Hundreds and thousands of such plans and intentions crowd our brains. All of this means that we are not Vaishnavas, for we are averse to the service of the Lord and have been enslaved by Maya.

Where will we find protection?

The only way to be protected is to take refuge of those devotees who are constantly engaged in discussing matters related to the Supreme Lord, who are

entirely dependent on Him. Such devotees are the friends of the fallen, the deliverers of the destitute. If we can take shelter of them, they will surely protect us.

How will we be able *to* feel god's presence?

Sriman Mahaprabhu said that the service to Krishna, service to His devotees and the chanting of the Holy Name are the three duties of every living being. The word *sevyā* indicates that person or entity that is the object of service. devotee or bhakta is the one who worships the Lord. And the activity of the devotee is called either bhajan or bhakti. All three of these items—Bhagavan, bhakta and bhakti—are eternal. None of them are altered by the passage of time. They are not affected by the creation, maintenance or destruction of this universe like the material elements. However, it is impossible to fully understand this until we are engaged in an unadulterated effort to serve the Lord. If this effort is mixed, we never understand the Supreme Person or the things that are connected to Him.

If we don't embrace the path of the ultimate good, if we do not become fully and constantly engaged in the service of the Lord, then we tend to give more value to the path of the immediate good, and embark on the path to perdition. We try to deceive the people of this world by saying, "I am a worshiper of Lord Vishnu. I am a servant of Krishna," but in reality we are the servants of our senses, servants of our wives and children. We are enjoyers engaged in fruitive work. Until a person has come to the point of engaging in pure, unadulterated and unmotivated service to the Supreme Lord, he has not yet come to his senses. This is our condition because the message of Lord Gaurasundar has not entered our hearts and therefore we are still contaminated with such a plethora of desires. Until we can understand that service to Krishna and His devotees is our only duty, we are being deceived. How long will it take before we are liberated from this misunderstanding? It will happen when we surrender unconditionally to a pure servant of Krishna. A vision of Krishna will be possible when our eyes are opened by the hand of a devotee who is constantly worshiping the Lord. If we think that the actor in a play who is dressed up as Narada is the real Narada Muni, then we are deceiving ourselves. It's like taking chalky water for milk. Only service to someone who is constantly engaged in worshiping the

Lord, who is serving the Lord with every step he takes, who does nothing but serve the Lord with every fibre of his being, only such service can give us pure Krishna bhajan. Only such a devotee can make us feel Krishna's presence. A person who is on the mental plane and absorbed in the sense objects cannot experience the Lord directly. Krishna is the devotee's personal possession, and therefore he alone can make a gift of Krishna to others. The mind that is forever turned toward sense gratification cannot experience Krishna. One has to turn the mind toward the service of Krishna if he wants to experience Him. If one identifies as Krishna's servant and engages constantly in His service, he becomes aware of the presence of the object of this service. This is the supreme consciousness. The object of service will be encountered on the path of devotion, on the path of service and not elsewhere.

What does it mean *to* attain krishna?

Attaining Krishna means to cut oneself off completely from this material world. When one is liberated and sees Krishna within his heart, that is called attaining Krishna. Attaining Krishna is life's ultimate accomplishment. It can only be accomplished through love. *vinā prema-se nāhi mile nanda-lālā*. "Without prema, one cannot attain the son of Nanda."

Who *is* a genuine sadhu?

Just because someone has matted locks of uncut hair or is dressed like a monk does not mean that he is a sadhu. Nor is someone who appears to be a rich householder not a sadhu. The person who is at every moment engaged in hearing and chanting about Krishna is the real sadhu. Such a person is always, at every moment, preoccupied by the pleasure of the Lord. He is busily engaged in serving the Lord with every action.

Who can speak *on the* bhagavatam?

Someone who has given his life to the service of the Bhagavatam, who at ever step, with ever bite, with every breath, serves Lord Hari. The Srimad Bhagavatam is *sāksād-bhagavad-vastu*.

The Bhagavatam is not a good to be traded on the open market. It is something that needs to be served, to be worshiped. A salaried or contracted worker can never discourse on the Bhagavatam. Therefore it has to be seen whether a speaker on the Bhagavatam is engaged twenty-four hours a day in sincere service to the Bhagavatam or is engaged in some other kind of work. A stipend holder or contractor cannot explain the Bhagavatam. First of all, refrain from approaching a professional priest. See whether he devotes his time fully to the Bhagavatam or not. One who has taken an academic degree in the Puranas is not necessarily qualified to explain the Bhagavatam.

bhaktyā bhāgavatam grāhyam na buddhyā na ca tīkayā

—“The Bhagavatam can be understood through devotion, and not through the exercise of intelligence or through commentaries.” In other words, if someone is going to speak on the Bhagavatam, he must himself be a Bhagavata. If he is speaking out of a desire for wealth or prestige or some other ulterior motive, then even if he lectures in a way that is pleasing to the listeners, he remains in fact a great distance from the Bhagavatam. Hearing from such a person will not have the effect of attracting the listener’s mind to the supreme truth that is at the Bhagavata’s core. The Bhagavatam cannot be truly glorified by one who is not himself a Bhagavata, whose entire existence has not been shaped by its teachings. Such a person is not only deceiving himself, but is cheating others by his pretense of teaching the Bhagavatam. Our relation to the speaker of the Bhagavatam is not the same as that of a student to his teacher or college lecturer. In the world, a superior teacher is one who is able to inculcate a particular lesson in his student. His moral life is not taken into consideration at all. The Bhagavata speaker must be held to a higher standard. He must be one who practices what he preaches. Therefore the scriptures say—

āpani ācari dharma jīvere śikhāya āpane nā kaile dharma śikhāno nā jāya

The Lord taught the world its religious duty through His own example. Without an example being set, no religious system can be implemented. One who is of bad character, who is dominated by carnal desires, who feels an unbounded need for personal aggrandizement and material

compensation, does not even really read the Bhagavatam, but is engaged in a kind of sense gratification in the guise of studying the Bhagavatam.

☐ **Srila B.P. Puri Maharaj's** ☐

Auspicious Advent *and* Boyhood

By Tridandi Swami Bhakti Bibudha Bodhayan Maharaj

If ever any of his children are lost, a loving father will immediately go to look for them, or send one of his other children to do so on his behalf. In the same way, out of His infinite love, the Supreme Lord again and again either incarnates or sends one of His own worthy devotees into this world to show the way home to the unlimited millions who are wandering lost and without direction on the paths of material existence.

Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati prays *to* his Guru Varga

If ever any of his children are lost, a loving father will immediately go to look for them, or send one of his other children to do so on his behalf. In the same way, out of His infinite love, the Supreme Lord again and again either incarnates or sends one of His own worthy devotees into this world to show the way home to the unlimited millions who are wandering lost and without

direction on the paths of material existence. In their pastimes, those devotees who are fulfilling the Lord's mission in this world often pray to Him for assistance, but the Lord arranges for such help beforehand by sending other servants, who will come forward when the time is ripe. In this way, the Lord sent Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, the incarnation of Nayanamani Manjari, as the son of Bhaktivinoda Thakur in order to assist him in opening the floodgates for the Ganges of pure devotion. Known in his childhood and youth as Bimala Prasad, Srila Prabhupada lived a life of obedience to his revered father from the very beginning of his life. In 1914, Bhaktivinoda Thakur left this world and, not long afterward, Srila Prabhupada's spiritual master Gaura Kishor Das Babaji Maharaj followed him. Seeing his two beloved spiritual guides disappear so soon after each other, Srila Prabhupada was griefstricken and deeply worried about what he would do next. On whom would he be able to depend in order to preach Mahaprabhu's message of pure devotion? And what would be gained by such preaching anyway? Confused about what course of action to take, he fell into a state of depression.

One day, while still in this state, Srila Prabhupada was chanting the Holy Names at the Yoga Pitha temple in the early hours of the morning when he had a vision of the Pancha Tattva—Sri Chaitanya, Nityananda, Adwaita, Gadadhar Pandit and Srivas Pandit—accompanied by Jagannath Das Babaji and his other spiritual guides, who all appeared to him in divine, effulgent forms. They called out to Srila Prabhupada, “O Bimala Prasad! You are a pure devotee! Apply yourself to the task of preaching pure love for Krishna with great enthusiasm.” At first, Srila Prabhupada was surprised. Then he started to shed tears of ecstasy and his entire body was covered with goose flesh. He asked, “O masters! You are raining down your causeless mercy on this servant. But if I am to preach I will need an army of qualified helpers. Where will I find such people? How will it be possible for me to preach pure devotion and love for Krishna without any assistance?” On hearing these words, his divine guides said, “Don't be discouraged, Bimala Prasad! We will send capable people to help you in this task very soon.” When we read the history of the Gaudiya Math, it is clear that very soon after this event a large number of talented and determined individuals did indeed flock to Sri Mayapur to help Srila Prabhupada in the task of spreading the message of pure devotion just as it had been taught and practised by Mahaprabhu. Years later, after achieving unprecedented success in spreading these teachings throughout India and even beyond its borders, when nearing the end of his stay in this world, Srila Prabhupada gave his disciples his final instructions: “Remain united and preach the message of Rupa and Raghunath with great enthusiasm, remaining obedient to the supreme reservoir of

devotion.” At first, Srila Prabhupada’s disciples followed this instruction and cooperated with each other in a spirit of trust and friendship in order to spread the teachings of pure devotion and to protect the people of the world from the influence of the dangerous Mayavada doctrine. Later, many of them formed their own independent missions. Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Maharaj started the Chaitanya Saraswata Math; Bhakti Prajnan Keshava Maharaj the Devananda Gaudiya Math; Bhakti Hridoy Bon Maharaj founded the Bhajan Ashram in Vrindavan. The world-wide preacher of pure devotional service, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj, established the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which is known everywhere as Iskcon. My siksha guru, Srila Bhakti Dayita Madhava Maharaj, established the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, and my spiritual master, Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Maharaj, after helping Madhava Maharaj for many years, founded the Gopinath Gaudiya Math. Besides these great souls, many other disciples and grand-disciples of Srila Prabhupada established preaching centers and maths all over the planet. We should know that all these Vaishnavas and gurus appeared in this world on the order of Jagannath Das Babaji and the Pancha Tattva, who had promised Srila Prabhupada in the vision he had on that day in 1915 that they would send him help. This is why Srila Prabhupada taught that anyone who preaches pure devotion while following in the footsteps of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu by keeping to the principles He taught is certainly the beneficiary of His blessings. In the light of that vision, he never spoke of those who had taken shelter of him as his disciples. Rather he called them “friends who have come to deliver him from danger.” He would also say, “I have no disciples, only masters.” By doing so, he reminded us that we should stand on guard against the kind of egotistical pride that can come when one preaches and takes disciples. One must be constantly aware of one’s constitutional position as Krishna’s eternal servant and, in accordance with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s Śikṣāstakam, cultivate the virtues of humility, tolerance, recognition of other’s good qualities and detachment from the desire for personal honors. In this spirit, one should chant the Holy Names in the knowledge that there is no superior activity for the soul. This is the behavior I observed in my own spiritual master, who personified the *trnāḍ api sunīcena* verse. As a result of the blessings that Jagannath Das Babaji and the Pancha Tattva gave to Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, so many great souls came to help him spread the religion of pure devotion and divine love. So it was that in the autumn of 1898, the Lord sent His beloved associate, Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Maharaj, to take birth in the village of Ganganandapur so that he would be able to assist Srila Prabhupada in bringing unfortunate souls like ourselves, who are forgetful of Krishna, find the way back to our eternal abode in Goloka Vrindavan.

Bhakti Promode Puri Maharaj's appearance

The exact date of Puri Maharaj's birth was Wednesday, October 18, 1898, which is Karttik 2, 1305 in the Bengali calendar, or the fourth day of the waxing moon in Ashwin according to the lunar calendar. The time was just before dawn, the most auspicious moment of the day known as Brahma Muhurta.

īśvarera janma tithi je hena pavitra vaisnavera sei mata tithira caritra

“Just as the Lord's appearance day is considered holy, so too is the day when a Vaishnava appears in the world.” —*Cbh* 1.3.48

Bengalis mark the autumn season with the annual Durga Puja festival. This is a celebration of the coming of Durga, the presiding deity of the material nature. While drummers make a tumultuous noise on the dhak and dhol, the people forget their cares in the festivities dedicated to the Mother Goddess, the worldly manifestation of Yogamaya. That year, without knowing it, they were also celebrating the arrival of a great soul into their midst and were thus inspired to make even more pandemonium and joyful music. The joy of Tarani Charan Chakravarti and Ram Rangini Devi, to whom the saint was born, was mirrored by the festive mood of the people at large. It seemed as if all of Bengal had dressed up in fine new clothes and was playing on auspicious instruments just to give their newborn child a loving welcome. Mother Nature herself joined the festivities by sending clouds full of gentle rain, as though to honor the child's arrival with showers of flower petals. The child was given the name “Promode Bhushan Chakravarti.”

Ganganandapur

Just as we hold the date of a Vaishnava's birth sacred, the place where he appears is also considered holy. Bhakti Promode Puri appeared in Ganganandapur, a large village in Jessore district, which now falls within the borders of Bangla Desh. It is situated in the Jhikargacha precinct of the Sadar subdivision, on the west bank of the Kapotakha River. This land was also the birthplace of Lokanath Goswami, the incarnation of Manjulali Manjari and associate of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu who achieved fame as the spiritual master of Narottam Das Thakur. He too had no doubt prayed to the Lord for this

divine child to take birth in his own homeland, so that Vaishnava culture and tradition might be kept alive there.

lokanātha tīrtha-bhūta yaśohara sthāne kapotāksa tīre gangānanda-pura grāme śrī-gaurāṅga icchā-mate āsile e prthivīte bhakty-āloke ujalite ei dharā dhāme Jessore District is the land made holy by Lokanath Prabhu's appearance. The village known as Ganganandapur is in Jessore, on the banks of the Kapotakha River. It is there that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu desired you enter the world to illuminate it with the light of devotion.

The birth of great Vaishnavas can turn any place into a pilgrimage spot, making it propitious for future devotees to flourish there. As such, after Lokanath's appearance in Jessore, many other great souls also took birth there. These included a number of Srila Prabhupada's dearest disciples, among whom were Bhakti Viveka Bharati Maharaj, one of his first sannyasis, and Kunja Bihari Vidyabhushan, who was to become the Gaudiya Math's general secretary and to be known as Bhakti Vilas Tirtha Maharaj after taking sannyas. Later, after Srila Prabhupada disappeared, he was also to become the president and acharya of the Chaitanya Math and all the Gaudiya Maths. Other great Vaishnavas born in Jessore were Bhakti Prapana Damodar Maharaj, who has only just recently entered the eternal pastimes of the Lord, and Vidyut Lata Ghosh, a blessed soul who was initiated by Bhaktivinoda Thakur himself. Even in the secular realm, Jessore has been home to a number of famous Bengalis, such as the poet Michael Madhusudan Datta, the musician Ravi Shankar and his brother, the dancer Uday Shankar.

As a larger-sized village, Ganganandapur had many of the things necessary to facilitate life—there were primary and “Middle English” schools, a post office, a daily market, a playing field, and a first aid clinic. As such, it was considered by many to be an ideal village. It had several different neighborhoods, in which Brahmins, kayasthas, fisherfolk, potters and blacksmiths, amongst others, lived and worked. It was not, however, a great center of Vaishnava culture, and most of the Hindus who lived there, including Bhakti Promode Puri's family, followed Smarta traditions.

Born as a brahmin

Promode Bhushan's father was a school teacher, well respected in the town for his education. He taught in a neighboring village and had to spend much of his time away from home. The family was not very well-to-do, but still no one ever lacked for food or clothing. Indeed, there is a Bengali saying about its land and people, that they have three principal riches: ponds and rivers full of fish, cowsheds full of cattle giving abundant milk, and fields and granaries filled with bountiful rice. To a greater or lesser degree, Tarini Charan possessed all of these.

krsna yadi prthivīte karena avatāra prathame karena guru varṣera saūcāre pitā mātā guru ādi jata mānya gana prathame karāna sabāra prthivīte janama

Whenever Krishna appears in this world, He first sends His senior family members like His father and mother, His spiritual master and other elders.

He Himself only takes birth after they have all taken their place in the world. —
Cbh 1.3.91-92

In the Treta Age, the Supreme Lord appeared in a royal family as Lord Ramachandra to teach devotion to duty. In the Dvapara Age, the same Lord was brought up by a family of cowherds as Lord Krishna, in this way sanctifying the Vaishya caste. In the Age of Kali, He appeared once again, this time in a family of Brahmins. By taking shelter of different castes in each of His incarnations, the Lord showed that one's caste is truly inconsequential when it comes to spiritual life. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says,

cāturvarṇyam mayā sṛtam guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśah tasya kartāram api mām viddhy akartāram avyayam

I created the system of social orders and stages of life according to their different qualities and work. Though I created this system, however, you should know that, being imperishable, I am not a part of it. —*Gita 4.13*

In other words, the Lord Himself created the divisions of society according to the work and qualities of each. He is thus the creator of each and every caste. Whatever the Lord Himself has created should be revered by human society. None of us has the right to hold any class of people in contempt. We have seen that the Lord's great devotee Prahlada took birth in a family of demons, while Haridas Thakur was similarly born to a family of Muslims. This is why the incarnation of Vyasa Deva in the Age of Kali, Vrindavan Das, clearly states in his Chaitanya Bhagavata—

jāti kula saba nirarthaka bujhāite janmilena nīca kule prabhura ājūāte

In order to show that race or social class have nothing to do with spiritual life, Haridas took birth in a lowly family on the order of the Lord. —1.16.237

By the same token, in whatever caste, race or nation a saintly person appears, his presence there is a blessing on those amongst whom he lives. Promode Bhushan was born in a brahmin family at the behest of Lord Chaitanya and the Pancha Tattva, both in order to show respect to the highest of the four castes created by the Lord and to bring the Smarta class of Brahmins back to the path of pure devotion to the Lord.

Rama Rangini approaches Lord Shiva

Rama Rangini Devi's first two children had been short-lived, so when she and the other members of the family saw such a lovely, effulgent child, they were naturally worried about his chances for survival. The family elders decided that if they were able to appease the governor of the mode of ignorance, Krishna's great devotee Lord Shiva, the All-Destroyer, then the child would surely be able to avoid a premature death. On their recommendation, Promode Bhushan's parents decided to "buy their child from Lord Shiva." They went to the nearby Shiva temple and gave the deity three shells or cowries, which were at one time used as currency in Bengali. In a humble tone of voice, they prayed, "O beloved Lord Shiva, best of the Vaishnavas! This child is yours. Please be

merciful and protect him from an early death. Take care of him always.”

By Shiva’s mercy, the beautiful and effulgent child grew up healthy and showed all the signs of growing up into a very special individual. Everyone in the family called him the blessed son (*vara- putra*) of Shiva, while popularly they called him Tin Kori because of the three shells that had been used to buy him from Lord Shiva. This name was soon shortened to “Tinú,” by which he was known to his family, childhood friends and schoolmates. Though both of Rama Tarangini’s children had died before Promode Bhushan’s birth, those born after him all survived. Altogether, there were three brothers and two sisters in the family. The older of Promode Bhushan’s brothers was Binode Bihari, the younger Nani Gopal. His two sisters were named Katyayani and Shivani.

The five children grew up under the care of their parents, but their paternal uncle or khuro mashay, Priyanath Chakravarti, and their aunt (pishima) also played a very important role in their upbringing. Their uncle loved taking care of young children and would help them with their studies and supervise their playing. He would watch over all their daily activities from bathing onward. Priyanath was very conscientious and took the responsibility of watching over Tarini Charan’s children very seriously, along with his own. Promode Bhushan’s mother addressed her brother-in-law by the respectful title commonly used at the time, “Thakurpo.” As in every Bengali village, the neighbors also kept their eyes on the children. Everyone affectionately called Promode Bhushan “Tinú,” the pet name used by his mother. The Chakravarti family’s neighbors in Ganganandapur found the boy to be an ideal child—well-behaved, obedient, peaceful, polite and friendly. Indeed, he was so remarkable that people began to suggest to one another that perhaps he was no ordinary child, but a great soul who had come into their midst to save them. They were sure that one day he would distinguish himself in some special way, but they had no idea how.

Tinú goes to school

When the appropriate time came, Promode’s uncle enrolled him in the local school. He quickly proved himself to be the most intelligent of all the village children, but really distinguished himself by showing an extraordinary spiritual dimension to his personality. It seemed as though Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati was already raining mercy on his eternal associate

and preparing him for his future role as a disciple and preacher of the Holy Name.

For, as Saraswati Thakur always said, “All learning reaches its ultimate purpose in the chanting of the Holy Name.” Vrindavan Das also writes:

pade kene loka krsna-bhakti jānibāre se yadi nahila tabe vidyāya ki kare What is the purpose of education? It is to learn about devotion to Krishna. If one does not become a devotee, then what is the point of his learning? —*Cbh* 1.12.49

Tinu was not only a good student, but from a very early age he also showed special devotion for the much-beloved village deity, Buro Shiva. The other villagers were confused. They thought, “We don’t allow our children to go to the Shiva temple or play too big a role in the village festivals because we don’t want them to be distracted from their studies. But we see Tinu always going to the Shiva temple and sitting there, absorbed in prayer and meditation or engaged in puja, and yet he still gets the best marks in the school’s annual examinations. This is really amazing to us!” No one can imagine just how the Supreme Lord will bestow His mercy, or on whom. All the members of Promode Bhushan’s family had been Smarta Brahmins for generations. In those days, people still took the lead of the village Brahmins in religious matters. As such, nearly everyone in Ganganandapur observed the Smarta rituals and followed their way of looking at life. And yet, even in this deep ocean of Smarta consciousness, Srila Prabhupada’s mercy made it possible for Promode Bhushan to naturally develop the Vaishnava virtues like compassion, devotion to truth, equanimity, gentleness, purity, nonpossessiveness, peacefulness, and an interest in everyone’s welfare. Seeing these virtues in the young boy was a source of constant wonder to all the villagers.

Tinu’s compassion

Not only did Tinu have a natural affinity for the Vaishnava virtues, but he seemed to understand everything in a manner quite different from the Smartas. An example of this is the following story that I heard Guru Maharaj himself tell about his childhood. One day, Tinu’s mother Rama Tarangini was chopping up a live fish for supper. Tinu had returned from school early that day and when he walked into the kitchen, he saw the poor fish flopping about in

pain. There was blood all over the place and some of it had even splattered on his mother's clothes. Rama Tarangini Devi greeted her son warmly, but he was so shocked by the sight of the blood that he just stared at her with wide open eyes. His mother thought that something must have happened at school and that he was troubled by that, so she started to make sympathetic inquiries: "Why are you home so early? Is something wrong? Has anything happened? Did you get into a fight with someone? Did the teacher tell you off? Why aren't you saying anything?" Tinu just looked at Rama Tarangini with tears welling up in his eyes and said, "Mother, why don't you cut me up and cook me? I am just as helpless as this fish. There is no way that you can just wash the blood off this fish, then cook and eat it. We say that we are all human beings, but how is killing innocent, helpless creatures like this fish a worthy action for humans? God has created us to eat fruits and vegetables. God has declared that eating fish or meat is sinful and unjust. This is unacceptable. Both those who commit an injustice and those who tolerate it are sinful, so from this day on, you must not allow fish to come into our kitchen. Otherwise, I swear I will never again eat anything that has been prepared there. This is my final word." Tinu's mother was startled to hear her small boy speaking such wise words, but being intelligent, she recognized that they were well-founded. So, from that day on, no one ever brought fish into the Chakravarti's family kitchen, nor was it again served in their household. In Bengal, Smarta Brahmins customarily serve fish on special occasions, so this radical change in the family's eating habits was like a thunderbolt crashing down on their heads, so unusual was it for them to follow a purely vegetarian diet.

Tinu and the cows

There is another, similar story about Tinu and his mother. One day, Tinu went with her to the goshala. He sat to one side and watched while she fed the cows. The family owned four or five cows, but at the time, one of them was not milking. The compassionate child observed that this cow was not receiving the same feed that was being given to the other animals—things like mustard oilcake (the pressed husks left over from the oil mill), grain and fresh cut grasses. He began to inquire, "Why don't you give this cow the same things you give the others. Is something wrong with it?" With an innocent curiosity, Tinu kept asking the same question over and over again. Rama Tarangini was a village girl and was following a longstanding custom, but was still unsure of how to respond to her son. At first she tried to avoid doing so, saying, "My child, why are you asking all these questions?"

But Tinu would not be brushed off so easily. With increased inquisitiveness, he continued, “Mother, I want to know all these things. Has this cow got a bellyache or something? Is something wrong with it, so that you can’t give it the same good things you give the other cows?” By now, Rama Tarangini suspected that Tinu was again about to give her some more lessons, just as he had on the day he had banished fish from her kitchen, but she tried to explain anyway: “We are not so very well-to-do, you know, so we have to be careful about how we spend our money. Your father gets a salary working as a teacher, but that is not enough for us to live decently. We have to supplement our income by selling the milk provided by these cows. That is why we give better feed to the ones that are milking. The better we feed them, the more milk they will give. We can drink as much of it as we need ourselves and sell the rest. Then, with the money we get from selling the milk, we can buy feed for the cows. So you can see, if we spend too much on feeding a cow that doesn’t give any milk, we will lose money. It’s as simple as that.” After getting this little lecture in economics from his mother, Tinu’s eyes filled with tears and he said to her, “Mother, I am not useful to you in any way, either. I don’t help around the house, nor do I bring any money into the household, but still you give me all the nicest things to eat. Why do you take such good care of me? I think that from now on, the best food should only go to those who are earning money for the family. I’ll just eat leftovers, like the cow that gives no milk. You can give me the nicer things when I am able to help the family financially.” Rama Tarangini laughed and realized that what her son had said was logical. So she decided to take the hint and stopped treating the cows unequally.

In this way, every one of Tinu’s actions was appropriate to a devotee of Krishna. Everything he did seemed to have some kind of profound lesson in it for his family, neighbors, or the people of Ganganandapur village. Seeing this, they began to understand that he must have received the blessings of some great soul either in this or a previous lifetime.

The basic principles of Vaishnava sadachar

In those days, Vaishnavas were generally not thought of very highly by the Brahmins. Thus it was seen as rather odd if the child of a brahmin family took up the Vaishnava way of life. But if anyone tried to show Tinu the error of his ways, he would end up defeated in debate. Though he was still a little boy, Tinu understood that the goal of life is to perfect one’s humanity. Human life

is about offering up God’s gifts in His service and enjoying the remnants as His grace.

The first stage of human life is to stop stealing (*acaurya*). The next step is nonviolence. All life comes from Him, we are all connected with each other. This means that no human being has the right to take the life of any other animal. God created the human body to survive on vegetarian foods, so there is no need for us to kill such creatures.

The third step towards full humanity is self-control (*samyama*).

Every human being has a duty to gain mastery over the senses. If one does not do this, then the difference between him and the lower forms of life is just one of external appearance.

The fourth step is cleanliness (*śauca*). Every human being must purify himself both internally and externally. Such purity does not mean dressing in fine clothes like a gentleman just to make a show of sophistication. Our greatest obligation as human beings is to purify our hearts of any tendency to deceive (*kapatātā*). Without such purification, we are more deserving of the name “demon” than “human.” The fifth step is devotion to truth (*satya*). In this world, everything is fleeting; nothing lasts forever. Sooner or later, everything will be destroyed. All things are constantly undergoing change—even our bodies are being transformed at every moment. We work so hard to preserve our bodies, but one day we will have to leave them behind. There is only one thing that is true in this world, and that is God Himself. In this age of Kali, the Lord is present to us in the form of His names. Therefore, for human beings like ourselves, God is the only truth. We can honestly call ourselves human beings only when we take refuge in the Holy Name. These five characteristics that define true humanity are all essential parts of the Vaishnava way of life. Therefore every human being must accept the principles of Vaishnava behavior. It is not enough to be a brahmin by birth. These are the things that Tinu shared with his mother and the other villagers. In this way, from a very early age Promode Bhushan was engaged in enlightening people about the purpose of life. Even the most determined members of the Smarta community were reluctant to argue with him. In this age of Kali, Vyasa Deva became incarnate as Vrindavan Das. Tinu’s words find their echo in Vrindavan Das’s Chaitanya Bhagavata.

brāhmaṇa haiyā-o jādī avaisnava hoy

tabe tāra ālāpe-i punya jāya khoy

To even converse with a brahmin who is not a Vaishnava erodes one's accumulated good deeds. —*Cbh* 1.16.305

If one goes beyond the superficial teachings of the Smarta Brahmins, one comes to know that the eternal constitutional position of the living entity is to serve the Supreme Lord. Any actions that lead to our perfecting our service to the Lord are identical with Vaishnava culture, which is thus the ideal of all human beings.

Anyone who thinks that if he is born in a brahmin family he has no further need to cultivate the Vaishnava virtues, and that the Vaishnava religion is only for the poor, the uncultured and the illiterate, is wrong. In fact, no matter what caste one has been born into, if one wishes to achieve the true goal of human life, he must take refuge in the Vaishnava religion. This was the example that Tinu set in his every action throughout his life. Even if one is born in a brahmin family, one still has to take up the Vaishnava dharma if one wants to do real good for humanity. It was perhaps to teach this to the world that Lord Shiva, the best of all Vaishnavas, caused Tinu to take birth in the Chakravarti family in answer to Rama Tarangini's prayers. Everyone in the Chakravarti family accepted that Tinu had been blessed by Lord Shiva and that he was his son in reality.

Tinu goes *to* middle school

Despite many difficulties, Tinu continued to make efforts to spread the Vaishnava ideals he held instinctively to the people of the village, all the while continuing his education. He finished his primary schooling and went on to study in the village's middle school (M.E.). The teachers there were also impressed by his behavior and began to reflect on Tarini Charan Chakravarti's good fortune, without which it is impossible to have a son of such good character. Anyone who saw Tinu immediately recognized that he was calm, serious, and compassionate, but when they heard him speak words that reflected both learning and wisdom, everyone started to feel reservations about addressing him by his nickname, Tinu. So they began using the name his father had given him at the time of his name-giving ceremony, Promode Bhushan. At school, Promode Bhushan made many friends who shared his own nature and interests. One of these was Paritosh Kumar Roy-Choudhury, who had been born in a Vaishnava family. Both of the boys behaved in a manner perfectly in alignment with Vaishnava principles. Both earned a reputation at school

for their intelligence as well as their diligence. The two passed most of their time studying, playing or going out on educational excursions together.

A crocodile in the Kapotakha river

Though there were many tanks and reservoirs in the village, most people considered bathing in the Kapotakha River to be healthier because of its moving current. One could hear the gurgling of the river as it flowed through the village. In the rainy season, the flood plain, which remained empty throughout the rest of the year, filled up right to the banks. Because the river was deeper and the current swifter during this season, Rama Tarangini warned her children to only bathe in it when their uncle was there to supervise. The five children obeyed their mother, but Priyanath Chakravarti was usually available and so they were often able to enjoy swimming with him and their cousins. Once, while they were amusing themselves in this way, a crocodile suddenly surged out of the water. Vaishnavas bring all auspiciousness to the world. On this particular day, by the Lord's grace, Promode Bhushan happened to be standing on the shore, as if standing guard over the lives of his brothers, sisters and cousins. He saw the water pouring off the creature's back and began to shout, "Crocodile! Crocodile! Get ashore, all of you!" As soon as they heard him shout, the other children quickly escaped onto dry land. They gratefully thanked him, "Today you have saved our lives!" It was as though Promode Bhushan had given them a foretaste of the way he would later save everyone he met by introducing them to the religion of divine love. Vaishnavas have no interest in the riches of this world. Once, for the amusement of the children, Priyanath Chakravarti went to a wealthy zamindar in a neighboring village and borrowed his elephant so that his children, nephews and nieces could have a chance to ride on its back. Promode also rode the elephant, but did so without much interest.

Promode Bhushan encounters a real Vaishnava

All the villagers had noticed Promode's exceptional character and thought that he was surely a gifted individual who had come into the world for some special reason. He had shown his predisposition for the kind of ethics that are

the basis of a Vaishnava way of life, but he had not yet encountered any pure practitioners who would set an example for him.

At this time, however, he met a person who had been living on the northern side of Ganganandapur village, who also seemed to have been sent by Mahaprabhu just to introduce him to the teachings and practices of Vaishnavism. He was a disciple of Srila Satchidananda Bhaktivinode Thakur named Manindranath Datta, but widely known as Bhakti Ratna Thakur. As stated earlier in this article, whenever the Lord sends his devotees into the world, he first sends those whose purpose it is to serve and protect them when they are young. So it was that Promode Bhushan became close friends with Bhakti Ratna Thakur and his family. Bhakti Ratna Thakur introduced him to Bhaktivinode Thakur's books and songs. All of this was part of the Lord's plan, for the Pancha Tattva had told Srila Prabhupada that qualified devotees would appear to help him accomplish his mission. Through the Datta family, Promode Bhushan received the light of the Vaishnava path for the first time.

☐ What is *the* use *of* a long life? ☐

by His Divine Grace Srila B.P. Puri Maharaj

Though Sridhar Maharaj was three years my senior, he only joined the Gaudiya Math three years after I did. But no one was a greater scholar than he. Srila Prabhupada loved him very much. Of course, simply living a long life on its own is not everything. Now I am not speaking of him, but of myself when I say that. Life is meant for doing bhajan and sadhan. Srila Sridhar Maharaj was bed-ridden, and yet he was preaching Mahaprabhu's message all over the world.

I, on the other hand, am very unfortunate. It is true that I have been given no shortage of mercy from Srila Prabhupada. He distributed his blessings freely, but one has to be able to receive it. Shaunaka Rishi says in the Bhagavatam—

taravah kim na jīvanti bhastrāḥ kim na śvasanty uta na khādanti na mehanti kim grāme paśavo ‘pare

Do trees not live long lives? Do bellows not breathe? Do the other village beasts not eat and copulate? —SB 2.3.18

If success in life were to be measured only by its length alone, then the banyan tree would be the most successful life form, wouldn't it? Here in the Shibpur Botanical Gardens there is a banyan tree that is very old, but apparently there is an even older tree in Madras, which is said to be over a thousand years old. They cannot even find its original trunk, it is so huge, covering an area of over one square mile. But that does not mean that it has achieved life's perfection. So, it is not enough for a human being to simply live a long time if he just lives like a tree. It is not enough to simply survive. A tree lives for a long time, doesn't it? But, then again, it is not enough to breathe, huffing and puffing like the bellows in a blacksmith's shop. Air is going in and out, but that is not life! And then, “do the village animals not eat and copulate?” The village animals, the dogs and cats, are eating, so what is special about that? Do they not reproduce and have children? So what is the distinction of having a human form of life? Therefore it is said,

śva-vid-varāhostra-kharaiḥ samstutah puruṣaḥ paśuḥ na yat-karna-pathopeto jātu nāma gadāgrajah

Only those who are like dogs, stool-eating hogs, camels and asses praise that beast-like man whose ears have never heard Krishna's name. —SB 2.3.19

One of Lord Krishna's many names is Gadagraja. But, if someone has not heard this or any other of Krishna's names—*jātu* means “never”—then he is only considered to be noble or worthy in the eyes of dogs, jackals, and other animals. He is, in fact, nothing more than a sort of glorified animal. These other lowly creatures may accept him as their king, but he is just another animal. So a person whose ears have never been blessed by hearing the sound of Krishna's name is simply wasting his life.

Using *the ears and tongue in* Kishna’s service Shaunaka then goes on—

*bile batorukrama-vikramān ye na śrīvataḥ karna-pute narasya jihvāsati
dārdurikeva sūta na copagāyaty urugāya-gāthāḥ*

O Suta, the ears of one who never hears the glories of Krishna’s pastimes are like holes in the ground, while the tongue that never loudly sings about Him is like that of a frog. —SB 2.3.20

The ears that haven’t allowed the Lord’s names or pastimes to enter there are like the little punctures in a seashell, lifeless and leading nowhere. First of all, like a cowry shell, they are practically worthless, and then on top of that, they are damaged! Shaunaka then speaks of the unchaste tongue that does not chant Krishna’s name. The sound it makes is being compared to the croaking of the frogs.

The word *dardurikā* means frog. The frog’s croaking attracts the attention of poisonous snakes, which understand that their prey is nearby. There are many different kinds of snake like cobras and vipers that just love to eat frogs. So on the one hand, the non-devotee’s ears are like a plugged cowry shell, on the other their unchaste tongues are like those of a frog. The sounds made by a frog simply call its death closer. God has given us our tongues; He has given us the power of speech. But here the tongue has been called unchaste. Why? The tongue has a particular duty to perform, if it does not do it, then it is unchaste. An unchaste or unfaithful woman who falls in love with another man and stops serving her husband brings ruin to her life thereby. Similarly, since Krishna gave us the power of speech, if we do not use this gift to glorify Him, that is called being unchaste. Shaunaka then goes on—

*bhārah param patta-kirīta-justam apy uttamāṅgam na namen mukundam śāvau
karau no kurute saparyām harer lasat-kāūcana-kankanau vā*

Even if adorned with a silken turban, the head that does not bow down to Mukunda is nothing but a leaden weight. And the hands that do not serve Him, even if ornamented with bright gold bracelets, are like those of a corpse. —SB 2.3.21

The head is said to weigh five seers, about five kilos. In Sanskrit, the head is sometimes called the *uttamāṅga*—the superior or highest limb.

But if this most important part of the body does not bow down to the Lord’s lotus feet, then it is nothing but a useless weight. Even if one is a king or noble and places a crown or silk turban on it, these only make it heavier. One wears these things to show his status, that “I am a king, or a general.” He puts on a headdress and crown of beautiful silks and gold and jewels, all to enhance his worldly prestige. But, in the final analysis, his head is nothing but a useless weight. The name of Krishna used here is Mukunda. The syllable mu means mukti, or liberation. The syllable ku indicates disgust. Together they mean a sense of disgust for liberation, which is what results when one attains divine love for Krishna. Another interpretation of this name comes from the word kunda, which is a beautiful flower. Krishna’s face (*mukha*) is likened to this flower. So if one avoids serving this Mukunda, whose beautiful face is like the blooming kunda flower, and love for whom makes liberation seem like a disgusting option, then one’s head is a useless load on his shoulders.

A breathing corpse

Shaunaka then describes someone who will not serve Mukunda—

śāvau karau no kurute saparyām harer lasat-kāūcana-kankanau vā

And the hands that do not serve Him—even if ornamented with bright gold bracelets—are like those of a corpse. —SB 2.3.21

If one doesn’t serve the devotees with the hands he has been given, then they are like the hands of a dead body. No matter how many golden bangles or bracelets one uses to beautify them, they are still worthless. The hands that serve neither God nor His devotees are like the hands of a corpse, no matter how beautifully ornamented.

Then Shaunaka goes on to say—

*barhāyite te nayane narānām lingāni visnor na nirīksato ye pādaḥ nṛnām
tau druma-janma-bhājau kṣetrāṇi nānūvrajato harer yau*

The eyes that have never looked on the deity form of Lord Vishnu are like the eyes painted on a peacock feather, and the feet that never walk to the sacred lands of the Lord are as useless as tree trunks. —SB 2.3.22

The designs on the peacock feather look like eyes, but they cannot see anything. A peacock does not do its seeing with its tail! They look so beautiful, these eyes, but they are not capable of seeing. In Bengali we sometimes use the expression *potala-cerā* to describe beautiful eyes, because the potala vegetable has an almond-like shape that is very attractive. So these eyes may be beautiful to look at, but they cannot see. So it is said that the eyes that don't look upon the beautiful forms of Lord Vishnu has eyes that are useless, like those painted on a peacock's tail.

The second part of the verse says—

pādaḥ nṛnām tau druma-janma-bhājau kṣetrāṇi nānūvrajato harer yau The feet that never walk to the sacred lands of the Lord are as useless as tree trunks. —SB 2.3.22

Those who do not use their feet to travel to holy places—just as you have come here to visit Mayapur—this is the real work of the feet. Those who do not come to see the places where the Lord had His pastimes have feet that are like a tree's roots. These roots keep the tree stuck anchored in one place. So the feet that haven't been used to walk through the Lord's places of pastimes are like roots that keep one immobile.

jīvaū chavo bhāḡavatāṅghri-renum na jātu martyo 'bhilabheta yas tu śrī-visnu-padyā manujas tulasyāḥ śvasaū chavo yas tu na veda gandham

The mortal who has never received the dust of a Vaishnava's feet is a living corpse. And the man who has never known the fragrance of the Tulasi that has been placed on Lord Vishnu's lotus feet is a breathing corpse. —

SB 2.3.23

One who has not received the dust of a devotee’s feet on his head is nothing more than a living corpse (*jīvan śavah*)— he may be alive, but his life is useless. And a *śvasan śavah*—a breathing corpse—that is someone who has never smelled the Tulasi leaves and flowers that have been offered to Lord Vishnu’s lotus feet. You may be living, breathing in and out, but you are just a breathing corpse. What is the use of such a life? If one does not worship the Lord or serve His devotees, then it is all useless.

Serving *the* devotees

Without serving the devotees, one cannot serve the Lord, because the Lord subjects Himself to His devotees. No matter how much you try to serve God, unless you serve His devotees, He will not accept your service.

arcayitvā tu govindam tadīyān nārcayet tu yah na sa bhāgavato jūeyah kevalam dāmbhikah smrtah

One who worships Govinda without worshiping those who are connected to him cannot be considered a true devotee. In fact, he is nothing more than a hypocrite. —HBV 10.362

Krishna says, “I will not accept the worship of one who is fundamentally hypocritical.” He simply refuses to accept such service. If you think, “I have worshiped Govinda in His deity form, but I don’t need to worship His devotees,” then Govinda does not accept the ritual acts you have performed. Nrisingha Deva says, “If you want to come to me, then you must first approach My devotee Prahlada.” This is found in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, in relation to the celebration of Nrisingha Chaturdashi—

prahlāda-kleśa-nāśāya yā hi punyā caturdaśī pūjayet tatra yatnena hareh prahlādam agratah

The holy day of Nrsingha Chaturdashi commemorates the appearance of the Lord to free Prahlada from his sufferings. Therefore one should take care to worship Prahlada before worshipping Lord Hari on that day. —HBV 14.473

Thus, if you do not worship His devotee, Krishna will not accept your service. Therefore we repeat this verse again—

arcayitvā tu govindam tadīyān nārcayet tu yah na sa bhāgavato jūeyah kevalam dāmbhikah smrtah

One who worships Govinda without worshipping those who are connected to him cannot be considered a true devotee. In fact, he is nothing more than a hypocrite. —HBV 10.362

There is another verse in this connection—

arcāyām eva haraye pūjām yah śraddhayehate na tad-bhaktesu cānyesu sa bhaktah prākrtah smrtah

One who reveres the Lord in His deity form with faith, but does not revere the Lord's devotees or other living beings, is called a mundane devotee. —SB 11.2.47

This is the lowest level of devotion—*prākṛta* or mundane devotion.

In this material world, everyone is madly pursuing various mundane goals. Even if you have somehow taken to the devotional path and the chanting of the Holy Name, become initiated and are engaged in the worship of the Lord's deity form, you are still on the lower stages of devotion, or a beginner on the path, a *kanistha adhikārī*.

You may have faith in God and worship Him sincerely, but if you do not recognize and worship the Lord's devotee, you are still considered a neophyte. Only when you offer the proper homage to the Lord's devotees are you elevated to the middle stage of devotional progress. The Bhagavata explains this as follows:

īśvare tad-adhīnesu bālīśesu dvisatsu ca prema-maitrī-krpopeksā yah karoti sa madhyamah

One who behaves with love towards God, friendship to those who depend on the Lord, with compassion to those who are innocent, and indifference to those who hate the Lord, is on the second level of devotional life. —SB 11.2.46

One should have love for God and friendship for the devotees. The word *bālīśa* n those who are philosophically unaware or ignorant. One should be kind to them by giving them the appropriate guidance. And finally one should ignore those who are inimical to Krishna or His devotees. Gandhiji started the non-cooperation movement. This is the tactic to use with your own children.⁵[\[4\]](#)

If your son is opposed to service to Krishna or dislikes Krishna’s devotees, then you don’t have to take drastic measures. You still take care of him and bring him to the doctor or take whatever steps are necessary if he falls sick or is unwell. But you should refuse to take water from his hand or eat anything that he has cooked. If you accept his food or water, that is like giving tacit approval to his attitude. It is like condoning his Vaishnava aparadh, and that is a kind of spiritual death. This is something that requires your attention. You don’t have to undermine his material health or well-being, so you take care of him as required, such as bringing him to the doctor when he needs it. But one day hopefully his common sense will awaken and he will think, “What an unfortunate soul I am! My parents are so disaffected with me that they won’t even drink the water I offer them.” Then perhaps he will feel genuine remorse for his attitude and will change. Unless one feels such remorse, however, one cannot make progress. This must not be like the forced apology one has to make after losing a court case. One is constrained to apologize in court, but that is purely external. Internally, one feels no remorse. The forgiveness we get in such cases has no spiritual value whatsoever. We may go to a devotee we have offended and say, “Please forgive me, Maharaj,” but inside we are still seething with anger. Thus, even if we are pardoned for our external acts, it is not real forgiveness. This is why an offense to the Vaishnavas is the most dangerous kind of offense.

yadi vaisnava aparādha uthe hātī mātā upare vā chinre tāra śuke jāya pātā

If at any time the wild elephant of offenses to the Vaishnavas runs amok, it uproots the creeper of bhakti and causes its leaves to dry up.—CC 2.19.156

This is what Krishna Das Kaviraj says. Everything is lost when one commits Vaishnava aparadh. One is engaged in the act of watering the creeper of devotion with hearing and chanting, and the creeper is growing. But,

seka-jala pāūa upasākhā bādi yāya stabdha haūa mūla-śākhā bādite nā pāya

The weeds and branches are also nourished by the water, interfering with the growth of the main creeper. —2.19.160

Back home in my village, we used to have a very nice jackfruit tree. But there was a banyan tree growing next to it. The banyan grew over and surrounded the jackfruit tree and suffocated it. So we had never had any jackfruit on that tree. So the other unwanted branches or plants interfere with the growth of the plant that we want to nurture. They are all growing luxuriantly, while the main trunk stagnates. We may be engaged in hearing and chanting, watering our devotional creepers in this way, our maths and temples are expanding, we are putting on festivals with grand pageantry, but something is still missing, because we are still engaged in criticizing the guru and the Vaishnavas. When we are engaged in such activities, then only inauspiciousness can come of it. And these inauspicious consequences even affect the spiritual master. He thinks, “This disciple of mine is a dear servant, and yet people are coming to me to criticize him. Not only that, but they think that they can use my name to condemn him.”

*satām nindā nāmnah paramam aparādhmā vitanute yatah khyātim
yātam katham u sahate tad-vigarhām*

The first offense is the greatest of all: to blaspheme devotees who, through their attachment to the Holy Name, spread its glories throughout the world. How will the Lord who is manifest in the Holy Name ever tolerate such blasphemous activities? —*Padma Purana*

The Holy Name thinks, “This rascal is criticizing my devotee who is engaged in preaching My glories. I shall therefore withhold my mercy from him.” The most dangerous of offenses is to blaspheme the devotees. The glories of the Holy Name come into the world through them; they are the ones who preach the Holy Name. So the Holy Name says, “How can I tolerate such blasphemy to them?” Thus the Holy Name does not show mercy to such a person. This is why

Vaishnava aparadh is the first offense mentioned.

The difference between Krishna and the other gods

The next offense is to think that Lord Shiva and the other gods are somehow independent of Krishna. Brahma and Shiva are the Lord's great devotees; they are Vaishnavas and are very dear to the Lord. They are Vaishnavas, so one should respect them, but no one should put them in a place of honor over the Lord Himself.

harir eva sadārādhyah sarva-deveśvareśvarah itare brahma-rudrādya nāvajūeyāh kadācana

Lord Hari is always worshipable, for He is supreme amongst all gods. Even so, the others, like Brahma and Rudra, are never to be disrespected. —*Padma Purana*

The Lord Sri Hari is the supreme worshipable object, but the other gods are never to be disrespected. What then should we do? We should worship them, for they are themselves the servants of the servants of the Lord. We should respect them and pray for their intercession, that we may get the Lord's grace through them. We should never show disrespect for gods like Shiva. There are many Vaishnavas who are fanatically strict, who say that Lord Shiva is nothing. Lord Brahma is nothing at all. But Lord Vishnu has forbid such kinds of statements. Lord Brahma does a great service to the Lord in creating the universe; Lord Shiva is similarly rendering an important service when he dissolves the same universe. He is recognized universally as the greatest Vaishnava— *vaisnavānām yathā śambhuh*. He serves both the Lord and His devotees, so he is a great devotee and we should always show him respect.

Srila Jiva Goswami writes in the *Bhakti-sandarbha* (213), “Pure devotees see the spiritual master and Lord Shiva as non-different from the Supreme Lord, in the sense that they are most dear to Him.”

(śuddha-bhaktās tv eke śrī-guroh śrīśivasya ca bhagavatā sahābheda-drstim tat-priyatamatvenaiva manyante.)

Why are the pure devotee and Lord Shiva considered to be non-different from the Lord? It is because they are most dear to Him. Therefore, even devotees of Lord Krishna like ourselves fast on Shiva Ratri. Why do we fast? Because he is a great Vaishnava. Without his mercy, none of us is able to engage in the Lord's worship, nor will we ever be able to attain love for Krishna. This is why we do it—unlike the ordinary people who believe Lord Shiva to be an independent supreme deity. They observe Shiva Ratri because it is part of the Smarta procedure. As a result, it is forbidden for us to take the prasād that comes out of Smarta rites. We offer our respectful obeisances from a distance. According to the Vaishnava philosophy, we offer our respects to the Shiva linga because we recognize Shiva as a great devotee. We have no qualms about doing so, but we do not accept the prasād from puja done according to the Smarta process. Something similar applies in the matter of Satya Narayan puja. Of course we accept that Satya Narayan is God. Satya means “truth.” So Narayan is the supreme eternal truth, and His devotees are also true and eternal. Even so, we tell them that we don't accept their way of worshiping Him. “You eat fish, meat and whatnot, so we will not accept the prasād that comes from your worship of Narayan. This may incur your displeasure, so be it.” Many people are offended when we refuse the prasād from Satya Narayan's puja. But they do not really understand our reasons for doing so. It is just that we cannot accept the way that they worship Narayan.

The Panchopasakas are those who worship five different gods, identifying each one of them as the supreme deity. Sure they say that Vishnu is the Supreme Lord, but they also say that the Sun God is the Supreme Lord, Shakti is the Supreme Lord, Shiva is the Supreme Lord, and Ganesh is the Supreme Lord. They accept that each of these five gods is equally the Supreme Lord. We on the other hand only accept one God, that is, Vishnu Krishna—Vishnu if we worship on the path of awe and reverence, Krishna if we worship on the path of intimate affection.

Krishna, *the* God of affection

Krishna is the supreme God of all gods. Vishnu is Krishna's manifestation, but they are not really distinct from one another. Some distinction is made from the point of view of the kinds of relationship that exist between the devotees and these different forms of the Lord, but Narayan Vishnu and Krishna are not distinct theologically speaking. From the point of view of sheer delight, or *rasa*, however, Krishna is superior to Vishnu. He is the embodiment of the twelve kinds of *rasa*.

Therefore Rupa Goswami calls Him *akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti*. The twelve kinds of *rasa* are divided into two categories. There are five primary *rasas*—peacefulness, servitude, friendship, protectiveness, and romantic love. And there are seven secondary *rasas*—laughter, astonishment, compassion, fear, heroism, horror and disgust. Krishna is the proprietor of these twelve kinds of relationship. That is why He is called the embodiment of unlimited types of relationship—*akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti*. From this point of view, Vishnu Narayan is somewhat less than Krishna because He only shares two and a half types of relationship with His devotees—the peaceful, servitude and the type of friendship that is tinged with respect. It is not the kind of free and easy friendship shared by Krishna with His friends in Vraja. In Vrindavan, Krishna gives His leftovers to His friends, and His friends similarly give Him their leftovers to eat. Krishna says to His friends like Sridama and Sudama, “We need to pick some tal fruit from this tree.” They ask Him how they should go about it. So Krishna tells them to climb on His shoulders. This is how Sridama and Sudama end up climbing on His shoulders, one standing on top of the other. Sridama is at the top and picks the most delicious-looking fruit from the tree. First he bites into it, to see if it is sweet or bitter. He tastes it himself to test it, to see if it is good enough for Krishna. Is this a manifestation of greed or a desire to please the tongue? Not at all! They are thinking, “I am going to give this to my friend, but how can I give it to him if it is bitter? So I'll give it a little taste to see if it's sweet or not.” So Sridama takes a bite and then passes it to Sudama, cowherd boy on whose shoulders he is standing. Sudama also tests the tal fruit and, approving, says to Krishna, “Here, Kanai, try this tal fruit. It's really good.” So their friend Krishna eats the fruit that has been contaminated not just by one, but by two of His friends! This is the kind of intimate friendship that exists in Vraja. On the other hand, the friendship devotees have with Vishnu in Vaikuntha is completely different. When Arjuna saw Krishna's universal form with thousands of arms, he was overcome with fear and said, “I have behaved improperly with You, because I was unconscious of Your divine glories.” But in Vraja, Krishna's friends do not care. They only think of Krishna as their friend. They may play some kind of game with Him, with the agreement that the losers would have to carry the winners on their shoulders. Krishna would lose on purpose and His friends say, “Krishna, You have lost, so now You have to carry us on Your shoulders.” This is the nature of

friendship in Vraja. Krishna and His cowherd friends often enjoy eating picnics together. They sit in a circle, placing Krishna in the center. They offer Him whatever in their lunches they think tastes good. Every one of them thinks that Krishna is looking at him alone. He looks at each one of them, as if saying, “I am eating something really good. Do you want to have a taste?” And He says, “Try this.” In this way, Krishna is eating their leftovers and feeding them His. This is why it is said that Narayan only exchanges two and a half kinds of relationship with His devotees. Because of their reverence for Him as the Supreme Lord, they keep a certain respectful distance from Him. They are always conscious that “He is our Lord.” And so it is said that from the point of view of rasa, Narayan and Krishna are different, even though from the absolute standpoint there is no difference between Them. Just as it is an offense to consider Shiva or any other demigod to be an equal or independent Godhead, it is also offensive to consider the all-auspicious Vishnu’s name, form, attributes or pastimes to be different from Him.

Disrespecting *the* Guru

The next in the list of offenses to the Holy Name is showing disrespect to the guru. If one thinks the spiritual master is an ordinary mortal, a common man subject to the same rules of material nature as we, then that is called disrespecting the spiritual master or *guror avajānā*. The spiritual may indeed appear to us as an ordinary human being, but we should not trust our mundane vision in this case. We should think: “Krishna is the Deity in a form that accepts our service. At the same time, He appears before us in the form of a devotee in order to show us how to render service.” This is why Vishwanath Chakravarti says,

*sāksād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ kintu
prabhor yah priya eva tasya vande guroh śrī-caranāravindam*

I worship the lotus feet of my spiritual master, who is said by all scriptures to be Lord Hari himself, and is verily thought of in that way by all the saints. But this identity is due to his being very dear to the Lord. —*Gurv-astakam*, 7

What does the word *sāksāt* (“directly”) mean? In this case it means that the spiritual master is not an incarnation, but the source of all incarnations. Lord Krishna, the son of the king of Vraja, is the avatari, the source of all incarnations. So all the scriptures identify the spiritual master with this Krishna. Not only that, but the saintly persons concur. But there is a caveat to this conclusion—

kintu prabhor yah priya eva tasya

“This identity is due to the spiritual master’s being very dear to the Lord.”

The Vaishnavas are most dear to the Lord. Krishna is God as the object of our service, while the spiritual master is God in the form of a servant. We should think that the same Supreme Lord takes the form of a devotee or servant in order to bestow His mercy on us. This is why we bow down to the spiritual master and honor him. Similarly, in our prayers to Srila Prabhupada we say:

śrī-gaura-karunā-śaktivigrahāya namo’stu te

Obeisances to you, the embodiment of Gauranga Mahaprabhu’s compassionate potency.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s compassionate potency (*karunā-śakti*), His mercy, has taken human form and appeared as the spiritual master. This is why we do not put tulasi on the spiritual master’s feet. There are many who honor their guru in this way, but we do not. It is not to dishonor him, but because Tulasi Devi is, like the guru, ashraya tattva, meaning that they are both vessels of love for Krishna. It is not within our rights to tell one ashraya tattva to serve another. If I put Tulasi on the spiritual master’s feet it is like I am saying, “Tulasi Devi, bow down your head before this man.” So instead of putting tulasi on the guru’s feet, we are to place it in his hand. Back when Srila Prabhupada was present, there were many articles on this in the *Gaudīya* magazine.

Srila Prabhupada pronounces on this matter in an article in either the eighth or

the twelfth year. So this also falls into the category of *guror avajūā*. But the main characteristic of this offense is to think of the spiritual master as an ordinary man. And if we do that, what will happen? Krishna tells Uddhava—

ācāryam mām vijānīyān nāvamanyeta karhicit na martya-buddhyāsūyeta sarva-deva-mayo guruh

A disciple should consider his teacher to be my very self and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him to be an ordinary man, for he is the sum total of all the demigods. —SB 11.17.27

So you are not to see him as an ordinary man. Then how are we to look on the guru? Kaviraj Goswami Prabhu says—

guru krsna-rūpa hana śāstrera pramāne guru-rūpe krsna krpā karena bhaktagane

According to the revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is the manifestation of Krishna. Krishna comes in the form of the guru to show His mercy to the devotees. —CC 1.1.45

Pay attention to this instruction: Krishna Himself has taken the form of the guru in order to protect His devotees.

śrī-vigrahārādhana-nitya-nānāśrngāra-tan-mandira-mārjanādaṁ yuktasya bhaktāṁś ca niyujato 'pi vande guroh śrī-caranāravindam

I worship the lotus feet of the spiritual master, who is engaged in regularly worshiping the Lord's deity form by dressing Him and serving Him in other ways, by washing the temple and so on. Not only is he so engaged, but he also engages his disciples in these same activities.

—*Gurv-astakam*

Mahaprabhu also played the part of the guru, teaching the living beings by his own example. So the guru follows Mahaprabhu's example, doing as He did.

hare krsnety evam ganana-vidhinā kīrtayata bhoh

Chant the Hare Krishna mantra, counting the number of Holy Names that you chant. —Raghunath Das, *Stavāvalī*

The guru says, “Just watch me. Chant the Holy Names in the way that I do.” Just as a father teaches his son, the spiritual master instructs his students in the process of worshipping the Lord. This is how he teaches his disciples.

āpani ācari dharma jīvere śikhāya āpani nā kaile dharma śikhāno nā jāya

By practicing Himself, He taught the process of religion, for religious duties cannot be taught without setting an example.

If someone is a teacher and while puffing away on a bidi tells his student not to smoke, do you think his student will listen? You have to set the example. When I was a boy, I remember reading a story about the prophet Mohammad. Once a man went to see Mohammad and complained that his child was extremely attached to eating sweets. He asked the Prophet to please forbid him from eating them. Mohammad said to come back in a week, for he was himself attached to sweets and would first have to give them up before telling anyone else to stop. Don't chant the Holy Name without setting the proper example. At the same time you have to set example by chanting. Don't say, “You chant, I'll listen.” It is not enough to listen to others chanting. You also have to chant.

Faith in the power of the Holy Name

The next offense is to blaspheme the revealed scriptures. The revealed scriptures glorify the Holy Name, so we should not disrespect them. The following offense

is to say that the Holy Name's glories are exaggerated. The word *artha- vāda* means to think that the glories of the Holy Name are an exaggeration.

eka krsna-nāma jata pāpa hare pāpīra ki sādhyā āche tata pāpa kare

No sinner could ever commit as many sins as can be destroyed by a single utterance of Krishna's name.

You may make a face and challenge, "How could that be? Is that all you have to do? You just have to say the Holy Name once and your business is finished?" But this is an offense. One who turns up his nose at the glories of the Holy Name shows disrespect. Ananta Deva has unlimited tongues with which He glorifies the Holy Name for all eternity, and yet even He cannot come to the end of its glories. Are the wonders of the Holy Name so insignificant then?

Just a single utterance of the Holy Name can achieve so much, and yet I do not feel as though I have been liberated. Why? It is basically because I have committed this offense to the Holy Name. I have no faith, I am filled with doubts. I continue to think the Holy Name is just an ordinary sound. Because I commit so many offenses I do not get the full benefit of the chanting. The next offense is *hari-nāmni kalpanam*—to invent some meaning for the Holy Name. The example is given of Vallabha Bhatta who came to Mahaprabhu and said, "I have written an explanation of the Holy Name." And what did Mahaprabhu answer?

*prabhu kahe—krsna nāmera bahu artha nāhi māni śyāmasundara
yaśodānandana ei mātra jāni*

The Lord said, "I do not accept many different meanings for Krishna's name. I only know that Krishna is the beautiful black boy, the son of Yashoda, that is all." —CC 3.7.84

To think otherwise is called *hari-nāmni kalpanam*—imagining meanings for the Name. The Mayavadis do not accept the eternal

nature of the Lord’s name, form and attributes. So they devise so many symbolic meanings for the Holy Name. The word hari can have so many meanings—it can mean lion or frog. It can mean “I steal.” Of course this is a valid meaning, because Krishna does steal something from us.

he hare! mādhyura-guṇe harile ye netra-maṇe mohana mūrati daraśāya

O sweet and glorious Hari! You have stolen My eyes and heart by showing Me Your enchanting form.

So if your explanations of the Holy Name illuminate its glories, there is no fault. The next offense is—

nāmno balād yasya hi pāpa-buddhir na vidyate tasya yamair hi śuddhiḥ

One who thinks that he may commit sins on the strength of the Hare Krishna mantra’s power to overcome all sinful reactions is such a great offender that he cannot be purified by any amount of regulative activities, meditation, withdrawal of the senses from their objects, concentration or any other yoga practice.

This is called sinning on the strength of chanting. You can’t commit sins all day and then chant at night, thinking that you will be able to counteract their effects. To chant in this way is offensive. If you chant in this way, then no amount of other pious activities will be able to rid you of the offense. Sin is something common, which has an impact on a person’s body and mind. Offenses, however, go straight to the soul and affect it.

Then it is said:

dharma-vrata-tyāga-hutādi-sarvaśubha-kriyā-sāmyam api pramādaḥ

The eighth offense is to erroneously think that chanting the Holy Name is in any way equal to any other kind of religious activity, vow of renunciation, sacrificial ritual or auspicious mundane performance. —*Padma Purana*

One can perform other religious activities, like fire sacrifices, with a great deal of ceremony, and the scriptures are full of appreciation of their potency. But Hari Das Thakur, who chanted three lakhs every day, said that even chanting the Holy Name once is greater than any such sacrifice. Anyone who says that even hundreds and hundreds of Ashwamedha sacrifices are equal to one Holy Name is an offender to the Name. The scriptures say that in the age of Kali, the sacrifice of the Holy Name is the essence of all religious sacrifices. The next offense is given—

aśraddadhāne vimukhe’py aśrnvati yaś copadeśah śiva-nāmāparādhah

The ninth offense is also very serious: to instruct the glories of the most auspicious Holy Name to someone who has no faith, who is uninterested or who is not listening. —*Padma Purana*

One might think, “This is a rich man’s son, I wonder if I can make him my disciple, even though he has no faith.” This is a kind of offense that is committed by someone acting as a guru. You have to rid someone of his faithlessness before you make him a disciple. You can’t just take someone who has no attraction to bhakti and force him to put on neck beads and initiate him. What is the gained by such actions? It is simply the desire for wealth, fame and prestige. Some Brahmins say, “We chant the Gayatri mantra. Why should we have to carry around a japa bag the way Vaishnavas do? What do we need neck beads for? What use is the Holy Name? We chant the Gayatri mantra and the Vedic hymns.” These are all different kinds of pride and ego. So this is the offense: “Even after hearing the glories of the Holy Name to remain attached to me and mine.”

*śrutvāpi nāma-māhātmyam yah prīti-rahito’dhamah aham-mameti
paramo nāmni so’py aparādha-krt*

That unfortunate person who has no love for the Holy Name even after hearing its glories being told, and remains attached to his ego and possessions, is an offender to the Holy Name. —*Padma Purana*

The glories of the Holy Name

So I have briefly explained the ten offenses to the Holy Name. But these ten branch off into hundreds of directions. There are so many offenses, all of which interfere with our gaining the fruits of the chanting. That is our fault, not the fault of the Holy Name. We are committing offenses to the feet of the Holy Name. We cannot gain the results of chanting as long as we chant offensively.

nāma rūpa-kali-kāle kṛṣṇa avatāra nāma haite haya sarva jagat nistāra

In the age of Kali, Krishna has become incarnate in His holy name. The entire universe will be delivered through the Holy Name.

Mahaprabhu explained this—

harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā

In the age of Kali, there is certainly no other refuge, no other refuge, absolutely no other refuge than the name of Hari, the name of Hari, the name of Hari alone.

Then Mahaprabhu goes on to explain—

dārdhya lāgi harer nama ukti tina bāra jada loka bujhāite punar eva-kāra three times. And then, to convince the very stupid, it adds the word eva, “certainly.”

In order to drive home the point, this verse repeats “the name of Hari”

The name of Hari, the name of Hari, the name of Hari. Then *eva*, which is used in Sanskrit to emphasize the meaning of the words that precede it.

Then the word *kevalam* is added to add further emphasis.

What is being emphasized? That the paths of knowledge, yoga, austerities or other kinds of works are useless. Following the paths of knowledge, yoga, or austerities will not produce the desired result. The word *anyathā* means “otherwise.” Anyone who takes shelter of produce the desired result. The word *anyathā* means “otherwise.” Anyone who takes shelter of anything else will at best only achieve some kind of superficial salvation. If someone does not accept this and says, “No sir, one can do so many other things,” then what, has the scripture suddenly become untrue? Such a person will not achieve spiritual perfection. The verse says, “No other way, no other way, no other way.” Three times. *nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatiḥ anyathā*. Narada Muni says all these things in the *Brhat Nāradya Purāṇa*. So if we chant the Holy Name properly, we will achieve all perfection. But if we chant and still commit offenses, then what should we do?

bhūmi-skhalita-pādānām bhūmir evāvalambanam tvayi kṛtāparādhānām tvam eva śaranam prabho

Even when one trips on the ground, he still has only the ground to support him. Similarly, even though we have committed offenses to You, O Lord, we have no refuge other than You.

You live in rural areas and villages so you understand all these things. If you pour water on clay, then it becomes slippery and you will come crashing down. But you have no choice—you have to put your hand on the ground to get support if you want to stand up again. So we pray, “O Lord! Knowingly or unknowingly, we may have committed so many offenses to Your lotus feet, but please be merciful and protect us from our own faults and give us shelter anyway.

The ground is still the only support of one who trips and falls. We may have committed so many offenses to Your lotus feet, but please be merciful and forgive us. Please give us a place at Your lotus feet.” In this Age of Kali, chanting the Holy Name is the only way to worship the Lord. You won’t find any better means of worshiping the Lord than this. This is why Mahāprabhu spent so much time explaining the glories of the Holy Name. From the beginning to the end of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, we have this glorification of the Holy Name. After 18,000 verses, the final couplet of the *Bhagavatam* specifically glorifies the chanting of the Holy Name,

nāma-sankīrtanam yasya sarva-pāpa-pranāśanam pranāmo duḥkha-śamanas tam namāmi harim param

I bow down to the Supreme Lord Hari, the chanting of whose name results in the destruction of all sin, and by paying homage to whom all miseries are quieted. —
SB 12.13.23

So the Bhagavatam concludes with this glorification of Harinam sankirtan. It begins with a meditation on the supreme truth—
satyam param dhīmaḥi. From this beginning point, the Bhagavatam discusses karma, jnana and yoga, but then at the end returns to the glories of the Holy Name—*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktiḥ*. The Lord has placed all His powers in the Holy Name. No restrictions are made about time or place. So, it is said,

kṛṣṇa-varṇam tvisākṛṣṇam sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārsadam yajūaiḥ sankīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ

In the Age of Kali, the Golden Lord, upon whose lips the name of Kṛṣṇa always remains, appears in the company of His expansions, portions, weapons and associates. Those who are very intelligent will worship Him through the sacrifice of congregational glorification (*sankīrtana-yajūa*). —SB 11.5.32

Kaviraj Goswami translates—

sankīrtana-yajūe tāṇre kare ārādhana sei ta sumedhā āra kali-hata-jana

Anyone who worships the Lord by the sacrifice of the Holy Name is most intelligent. As for the rest, they have been defeated by the spirit of the age of quarrel. —CC 2.11.98-9

The essence of this age of Kali is the sacrifice of the Holy Name. Other kinds of sacrifice are all mistaken to one degree or another. One has to seek forgiveness at the feet of the Holy Name while performing the sacrifice of the Holy Name. We have to pray for the forgiveness of the Holy Name. The Holy Name will forgive us, but not if we practice any kind of deception. If we call out with true sincerity, “O Lord, we don’t know how many offenses we are committing. Please forgive us all our offenses.” If we do this then we will receive forgiveness. But if we are stubborn then nothing good will come of it.

The lips of a serpent

Take for example all those people from Bangla Desh who do kirtan with a

variety of instruments like violins and harmoniums. On the one hand, they are chanting the Holy Name, and on the other they are smoking bidis. They wear neck beads and tilak, but they are not to be trusted. We should not listen to this kind of Harinam.

*avaishnava-mukhodgīrnam pūtam hari-kathāmrtam śravanam naiva
kartavyam sarpocchistam yathā payah*

One should not hear the pure nectarean sounds of Krishna katha from the mouth of a non-Vaishnava any more than one should drink milk that has been touched by the lips of a serpent. —*Padma Purana*

Milk is nectar, but if it has been touched by a snake, it presents a danger to life. In the same way, if a non-Vaishnava speaks on Krishna, he will inevitably be dangerously misleading. What is meant by non-Vaishnava—*avaishnava*? These people do not follow any of the Vaishnava ethical principles. They speak untruths, they gamble, and they eat meat and fish. At the same time they are engaged in chanting the Holy Name. In Khalkul, there was a man who had the title “Ray Bahadur.” He was an important barrister in Jessore district, Radhika Prasad Babu. His daughter was my disciple. I was on my way to visit her house and we came to a crossroad where a barrister named Ramesh Bakshi lived. He was a disciple of Ramdas Babaji. It was evening and so we put up there for the night. I gave a lecture in the Bhagavatam. I think I was speaking on the Sixth Canto. While I was speaking, he started to show ecstatic symptoms. Tears poured down his cheeks and clear mucus flowed from his nose. The very next morning, however, he was a lawyer again! We heard him speaking with his entourage and were utterly flabbergasted to hear the kinds of things they said. They all ate meat after offering it to Krishna with a tulasi leaf! Of course, it is true that the Holy Name is full of all potencies, but these fellows have no access to these potencies. The Holy Name does not bestow its blessings on them. This is why the Padma Purana discusses the ten aparadhs. Did Mahaprabhu not speak of these offenses? Does the Chaitanya Charitamrita not discuss these offenses?

As in Mahaprabhu’s teachings to Rupa Goswami—

brahmānda bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja

In the course of traversing the universal creation of Brahma, some fortunate soul may receive the seed of bhakti-lata, the creeper of devotional service. This is all by the grace of guru and Krishna. —CC 2.19.151

*mālī haūā kare sei bīja āropana śravana-kīrtana-jale karaye secana upajiyā
bāre latā brahmānda bhedi jāya virajā brahma-loka bhedi para-vyoma
pāya tabe jāya tad-upari goloka-vrindāvana kṛṣṇa-carana-kalpa-vrkse kare
ārohana*

Then taking the role of a gardener, he plants the seed in his heart and waters it with the acts of hearing and chanting. The creeper sprouts and starts to grow until it penetrates the coverings of the universe, crosses the Viraja River, passes through the Brahmaloка until it reaches the spiritual sky. From there, it continues to grow until it reaches Goloka Vrindavan where it winds around the desire tree of Krishna’s lotus feet. —CC 2.19.152-154

tānhā vistārita haūā phale prema phala inhā mālī sence nitya śravanādi jala

The creeper there grows luxuriantly and gives abundant fruits of divine love. Meanwhile, the gardener goes on caring for the creeper by watering it with hearing and chanting about Krishna. —CC 2.19.155

At this point, He says—

yadi vaisnava aparādha uthe hātī mātā upare vā chimre tāra śuke jāya pātā

If at any time the wild elephant of offenses to the Vaishnavas runs amok, it uproots the creeper of bhakti and its leaves dry up. —CC 2.19.156

Therefore we have to pay special attention to avoid offenses to the Vaishnavas. And we also have to pay attention to the weeds of desires for sense enjoyment, liberation or mystic powers. There are also the weeds of the desire to be worshiped, to engage in politicking or in doing harm to other creatures. One must be free from these kinds of weeds in order to take the Holy Name. And we must pray with all our hearts to the spiritual master and the Vaishnavas.

guru vaisnava bhagavān tinera smarana tinera smarane haya vighna-vināśana

I meditate on the guru, the Vaishnavas and the Lord. By remembering them, all obstacles are destroyed and one quickly attains the fulfillment of his desires. — CC 1.1.20-21

We must always be attentive (*sāvadhānī*) to the spiritual master and the devotees.

*parasparānukathanam pāvanam bhagavad-yaśah mitho ratir mithas
tustir nivrttir mitha ātmanah*

Devotees talk to each other about the glories of the Lord. In each other's association, they find pleasure and satisfaction and teach each other about how all their distresses can come to an end. —SB 11.3.30

eka krsna-nāma jata pāpa hare pāpīra ki sādhya āche tata pāpa kare

A single utterance of Krishna's name is capable of destroying more sins than a sinner could ever commit.

It is not enough to keep saying that you are engaging in devotional service. Why? Because you are not getting the results, are you? That is why you have to pray to the Lord, "Please protect me. I am unable to chant the Holy

Name in pure consciousness. Please be merciful to me.” The heart has to be softened to the point of melting. We have to pray for grace. Then our acts of devotion will have results. The Holy Name will also be merciful.

Enjoying Hari Katha

My God, but the words keep pouring out of me! I hope I am not wasting your time.

Devotees: We have been most fortunate to be able to hear all these things from you. This has brought us great joy. This good fortune is the result of millions of lifetimes of pious actions.

Guru Maharaj: The Bhagavata says, *parasparānukathanam pāvanam bhagavad-yaśah mitho ratir mithas tustir nivrttir mitha ātmanah* (SB 11.3.30) This is called ishtagosthi. Speaking to one another, informing one another. If I spoken a bit much, it is not because I am brazen. I am not trying to show off how many verses I have memorized or how much I know. My goal is to firm up our minds on the goal of life, what do you think? This is why we have to discuss such matters.

*parasparānukathanam pāvanam bhagavad-yaśah mitho ratir mithas
tustir nivrttir mitha ātmanah*

The devotees enjoy discussing the purifying glories of the Lord amongst themselves. This is how they find pleasure, and satisfaction, and the joy of the spiritual self with each other.

*smarantah smārayantaś ca mitho’ghaughā-haram harim bhaktyā saūjātayā
bhaktyā bibhraty utpulkām tanum*

They remember and they remind each other of Lord Hari, who destroys unlimited sins. Through such devotion, they develop love for Krishna, and this fills their bodies with ecstatic symptoms. —SB 11.3.30-31

by His Divine Grace Srila B.P. Puri Maharaj

Jaya Nrisingha! Jaya Prabhupada! We are gathered here today in Sri Sri Vrindavan Dham. This Vrindavan is the place where Krishna held His Rasa Lila. This is where we are physically present today, but what I want to talk about is how we can truly enter this Vrindavan Dham, spiritually.

The appearance of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

In order to give us the ability to enter the site of His Rasa Lila, Krishna himself appeared in Nabadwip-Mayapur, which is not different from Vrindavan, as the combined form of Radha and Krishna. In this golden form, Lord Hari accepted Jagannath Mishra as His father and Sachi Devi as His mother. He was thus known as “Jagannath Mishra Nandan” and “Sachi Nandan,” though He is most familiar to the world as Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The special characteristic of Vrindavan is munificence predominated by sweetness, which means that externally the sweet pastimes of romantic love and intimacy are immediately visible, while the Lord’s munificence towards the world is hidden within them. On the other hand, Nabadwip’s special characteristic is sweetness predominated by munificence, meaning that the Lord’s magnanimity is immediately visible, but the same intimate pastimes displayed by

Krishna are present at their heart. Not everyone can understand the Moon of Vrindavan Krishna’s divine romance with Srimati Radharani. This is why He appeared again in Nabadwip-Mayapur in Bengal, revealing another, extraordinary set of pastimes. As Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, He gave His special teachings in Mayapur, and performed His sankirtan pastimes in the home of Srivas Pandit, just like Krishna performed Rasa Lila. We individual souls are trapped in illusion. Unless we follow the teaching that Lord Chaitanya gave in Mayapur-Nabadwip, none of us will be able to enter the Rasa Lila in this land of Vrindavan. Mahaprabhu’s dear associate, Narottam Das Thakur, says—

śrī-gauda-mandala-bhūmi, jeba jāne cintāmani tāra hoy braja-bhūme bās

Anyone who understands that the territory around Nabadwip is completely spiritual achieves residence in Vraja. —*Prārthanā*

We are here in the territory of Vraja, *vraja-mandala*.

But only someone “who understands that the territory around Nabadwip is completely spiritual” is truly able to attain residence here. Krishna is manifested in Nabadwip in five aspects as the Pancha Tattva.

śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi gaura-bhakta-vṛnda

This Pancha Tattva appeared in this world and participated in the sankirtan pastimes in Srivas Angan. This is where Mahaprabhu started the sankirtan pastimes with His devotees. The Srivas Angan is therefore equated with the place where Krishna engaged in the Rasa dance in Vrindavan. It was Srila Prabhupada who first identified Srivas Angan in this way.

There is no refuge but *the* Holy Name

Narada Muni is the incarnation of devotion to Krishna. He was also present in Nabadwip as Srivas Pandit. In the Narada Purana, he tells us that in the age of Kali, there is no refuge other than the Holy Name—

harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatiḥ anyathā

The Holy Name, the Holy Name, the Holy Name alone! In this age of Kali, there is no other way, no other way, no other

way. There are 108 upanishads. One of these is called the *Kali-santarana Upanishad*. This text describes the glories of the Holy Name. These glories have also been spoken of in the first Mandala of the Rig Veda—

om āsya jānanto nāma cid vivikta mahas te visno sumatim bhajāmahe om tat sat

O Vishnu, your self-manifest name, Om, is the eternal form of cognizance. Even if my knowledge about the glories of reciting this name is incomplete, still, by the practice of reciting it I will achieve perfect knowledge. Om tat sat. —
Rig Veda 1.156.3

Mahaprabhu, the Supreme Lord Himself, explained Narada’s *harer nāma* verse in the following way—

dārdhya lāgi harer nāma-ukti tina-bāra jada loka bujhāite punah eva-kāra

For the sake of emphasis, Narada’s verse repeats the words *harer nāma* three times. Then, just to make it clear for the really dull, it stresses those words with word *eva* [“certainly”].

kevala-śabde punar api niścaya-karana jūāna-yoga-tapa-karma-ādi inverse

This assertion is further strengthened by the use of the word *kevalam* [“alone”], which prohibits all other processes, such as cultivation of knowledge, practice of mystic yoga, the performance of austerities or furtive activities.

anyathā je māne tāra nāhika nistāra nāhi nāhi nāhi e tina eva-kāra

Then, just to make sure it is clear that no one who disregards this teaching will

achieve salvation, the words “there is no other way” are repeated thrice.—
CC 1.17.23-5

The word *dārdhya* means “confirmation.” To confirm the importance of the Holy — *harer nāma eva kevalam*. The word *eva* is used in Sanskrit to emphasize something. This is then followed by the word *kevalam*, which negates all other process like philosophical speculation, yoga or austerities, none of which can be used to attain the Lord. Those who refuse to accept this fact can never get free from Kali’s grip. Kali has taken on a frightening aspect and holds us very tightly. Unless we can break away from his hold, we will never have the good fortune to worship the Lord.

The sacrifice of the Holy Name

The sacrifice of the Holy Name is the essence of all sacrifices. Mahāprabhu started the performance of this sacrifice in the home of Srīvas Pandit. He called on everyone to offer the oblation of their very being into the fire of this sacrifice. You have to jump into the fire of the Holy Name until the false ego is immolated. At the same time, the flames of this sacrifice bring seven blessings. The sacrificial fire is said to have seven flames, and by jumping into them, one attains seven great benefits. Mahāprabhu explains these seven benefits in the first verse of his Śikṣāstaka—

ceto-darpana-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpanam śreyah-kairava-candrikā

*vitaram vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam ānandāmbudhi-vardhanam prati-padam
pūrnāmrtāsvādanam sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-sankīrtanam*

All glories to Sri Krishna Sankīrtan! It cleans the mirror of the mind; It extinguishes the blazing conflagration of material life; It spreads the moon rays that make the white lotus of auspiciousness bloom; It is the life of

spiritual realization; It increases the ocean of divine ecstasy, and at every moment it gives a full taste of ambrosia with which it bathes the entire soul. — *Padyāvalī*, 22; CC 3.20.12

The first of these benefits is *ceto-darpana-mārjanam*.

Our first business is to clean the mirror of the mind, which is covered with all kinds of soot and dust. Our hearts have been dirtied by sin. Unless we can get rid of such sin, we will never be able to meditate on the Lord's name, His attributes or His pastimes. If a mirror is dirty, I will not be able to see the reflection of my face in it. In the same way, the many impurities in our hearts and minds are obstacles that must be cleaned away. If we don't, we will never be able to see the Lord. The Paramatma, or Supersoul, resides in our hearts. The Lord of the Self is the Superself, or Paramatma. In the Gita, Krishna says, *īśvarah sarva-bhūtānām hrddeśe'rajuna tisthati*—

The Supreme Lord is in every living being's heart as the Supersoul. The ultimate reason for His presence there is to give us His mercy, to lead us on the path to Vraja, but we are not able to see Him, nor can we hear Him. Nor do we heed His directions. We don't understand what He wants of us. That is why Mahaprabhu first tells us how we can clean our hearts by chanting the Holy Name.

What are the impurities that cover our hearts? When Krishna Das Kaviraj Goswami defines pure devotion, he says that first of all, it is free from other desires—*anyābhilāsitā- śūnyam*. *Anyābhilāsitā* refers to the state of wanting something other than Krishna. We all have so many desires for illusory things. When we become attached to them, we stop thinking of the Lord. These other desires do not allow us to remember Krishna. The chitta (the heart or mind) is the connecting link to the consciousness. It makes us think; it helps us to understand what we should or should not do. If the chitta is impure, then we engage in all kinds of improper acts, doing the very things we should not do. The impure chitta gives us a taste for the kinds of activities that will not help us advance on the path to Vraja. Sriman Mahaprabhu is so kind that He first tells us to clean the mirror of the chitta. If we want to go to Vraja, we must know how to get there. We can advance on the path to Vraja through the Lord's sankirtan pastimes. This is what Mahaprabhu is trying to communicate in the very first place.

anyathā je māne tāra nāhika nistāra Anyone who thinks otherwise will not be delivered. —CC 1.17.25

There are so many desires that lead us away from Krishna—jnana, karma, and all the things of this world, wife, children, and family. If our desires for such objects are too strong, then we have no qualification to advance on the road that leads to Vrindavan or Vraja. The eternal occupation of every spirit soul is devotion to God. The word bhakti is derived from the verb root bhaj, which means service—*bhaj-dhātuh sevāyām*.

Bhakti, or service to the Lord is the natural occupation of the inner self, of the soul. But our natural proclivity for such service is covered by material desire. Therefore Kaviraj Goswami Prabhu gives us this first definition of bhakti—*anyābhilāsa-*

śūnyam: there should be no other desires. Jnana, karma and yoga are all coverings that hide devotion and have to be cast off. No other process is as effective in doing this as devotion to the Lord, especially the chanting of the Holy Name.

*yamādhīr yoga-pathaiḥ kāma-lobha-hato muhuh mukunda-sevayā
yadvat tathātmāddhā na śāmyati*

Those whose minds are constantly troubled by lust and greed find that they do not get as much relief from the eightfold path of yoga as they do through direct service to Mukunda. —SB 1.6.36

The story of Saubhari Rishi

What is yoga? Yoga means to be united with the Supreme Lord. But how does such union come about? The eightfold yoga system includes following rules and regulations, various seating postures, breathing exercises, meditation, and so on. But as much as one follows this path, there is always the possibility of being distracted by sensual desires. The example is given of Saubhari Rishi.

He was a great yogi. He practiced his meditation either hovering in the air or deep under water. Through these practices, he had attained many mystic powers. However, even a yogi as advanced as Saubhari Rishi lost his status. Due to the offenses he had committed to Garuda, the Lord's great servant, he one day became distracted on seeing fishes mate in the river where he was meditating. At that time, the ruler of the land was the great emperor Mandhata. He had fifty daughters of marriageable age, and Saubhari went to his palace to ask for their hand in marriage. How his mentality had changed! Lust and greed had overcome him. He had been such a great yogi and now he was overcome by desire—*kāma-lobhohapatā muhuh*. The Gita says,

tri-vidham narakasyedam dvāram nāśanam ātmanah kāmah krodhas tathā lobhas tasmād etat trayam tyajet

There are three soul-destroying doors to hell – lust, anger and greed. So you must give up these three things. —*Gita* 16.21

The word *tyajet* here is in the imperative mood, meaning that one absolutely has to give these things up. But though Saubhari had tried so hard for so long to overcome lust, anger and greed, and had even attained mystic powers through the practice of yoga, he gave it all up in a moment and went running after Mandhata's fifty daughters. There is an important verse in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* in the chapter called "Prayers of the Srutis" that goes as follows:

vijita-hrsīka-vāyubhir adānta-manas turagam ya iha yatanti yantum ati-lolam upāya-khidah vyasana-śatānvitāh samavahāya guroś caranam vanija ivāja santy akrtakarna-dharā jaladhau

Those who try to reign in the wild horse of the uncontrolled mind by conquering the senses and life airs become frustrated and confused in their efforts. They are filled with all kinds of anxieties. Those who refuse to take shelter of a spiritual master are like merchants sailing the ocean on a captainless boat. —
SB 10.87.33

This verse means that those who follow the eightfold yogic path of *yama*, *niyama* cannot achieve complete control. The mind is as powerful as Pegasus, the mythical flying horse. It is almost impossible to control a wild horse, what to speak of one that can fly away. The conclusion is that these yoga practices are ultimately powerless to conquer the mind. Proof of this is found in the life of Saubhari Muni, who despite engaging in yoga for so long still became sexually excited on seeing fishes mate. All Saubhara's austerities had turned

him into a bag of skin and bones. He looked like nothing more than the skeletons we see in a doctor's office. When he arrived at the palace to ask Mandhata for his daughters' hands in marriage, the princesses ran away. They were not attracted to him at all, but covered their faces with their cloths and hid somewhere in the palace's inner quarters. Saubhari thought, "Oh! They don't like me!" So he used his mystic powers to make himself look even more beautiful than Indra. Then he could walk very easily into the king's residence. Not a single princess could be seen. But one by one, the fifty girls came and put a garland around his neck. Saubhari then took fifty different forms and spent a long time in sensual enjoyment with every one of them. Each of the princesses gave birth to many children. Then, after a long time, Saubhari suddenly regained awareness. "What have I done?" He exclaimed. How did this awareness come to him? The reason was that once he had been practicing his yoga in the waters of the sacred Yamuna River. As a result of this association, he suddenly thought, "What have I been doing? For so long I practiced yoga and now this has happened to me! I have gone mad for the company of women. Is this what I have to show for all my efforts?" As a result, he came back to his true self and went to Vrindavan, where he took up the practice of bhakti yoga.

So in the above verse, in the phrase *vijita-hrsīka-vāyubhiḥ*, the word *hrsīka* means senses and *vāyu* is a reference pranayam. The yogis attempt to control the senses through mastering the breath. But is it really possible to conquer the mind in this way? In fact, all such efforts will ultimately be for naught.

The need for a spiritual helmsman

The verse then goes on: *vyasana-śatānvitah*. Hundreds and hundreds of calamities befall us. Why? The Bhagavatam gives the example of a merchant who fills his boat with merchandise and sets sail on the ocean, but a boat that has no captain and no navigator. What is the navigator's function? He holds the compass. The compass' needle points to the North and allows the navigator to calculate which way to direct the vessel. There may be hidden rocks in the water, and if the boat sails into them, it will sink. But the helmsman is able to steer the boat away from these dangers. A merchant who has no helmsman will eventually have to abandon ship, because shipwreck is inevitable. In the same way, anyone who has taken shelter of a bona fide spiritual master, but doesn't act according to his instructions, is like that merchant. It is just as if he had no spiritual master.

The Srimad Bhagavatam elsewhere stresses how simply through devotion to the spiritual master one can control the mind—

sarvam caitad gurau bhaktyā puruso hy añjasā jayet

By devotion to the spiritual master, a man can easily conquer over all these obstacles. —SB 7.15.25

Altogether there are eleven senses. The mind is the eleventh sense and king over the other ten. What is the means for controlling them? Here the Bhagavatam says that if we can just take shelter of a spiritual master, devotedly serve his lotus feet, and worship Krishna according to his instructions, then we will be able to achieve success. And what are the spiritual master's instructions? They are the same as those given by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and in the scriptures. The spiritual master tells us to take shelter of the Holy Name. By taking shelter of the Name, one gradually gains control of the senses and the mind. The mind is a nearly invincible enemy, but though it resists, it can be defeated. The mind becomes devoted to Krishna through obedience to the spiritual master. It then voluntarily succumbs to the path shown by the guru. It ceases to act independently. Once the invincible mind takes shelter of the spiritual master's feet, and as one engages constantly in bhajan, it comes under control. Here is another verse from the Bhagavatam in the same vein—

nr-deham ādyam sulabham sudurlabham

*plavam sukalpam guru-karna-dhāram mayānukūlena nabhasvateritam pumān
bhavābhim na taret sa ātmahā*

This human body is the root of all benefits. It seems so easily obtained, yet is in fact extremely rare. It is like a boat especially designed for crossing the ocean of material existence. If one has a spiritual master to guide him like the boat's helmsman, and is given the favorable winds of My mercy, but still fails to cross over, then he is willfully committing suicide. —SB 11.20.17

Krishna says *nr-deham ādyam su-labham sudurlabham*

—“This human body is very rare.” This is because humans make up only a small number of the more than eight million species of life. By the Lord’s wish we have such a human body, which is the basis of the ability to worship God—*nara-tanu bhajanera mūla*.

The human body gives us the chance to engage in the worship of the Lord. What is gained by worshipping Krishna? Young men often ask this question. Indeed, many argue that there is no need to worship God. The answer to this is that devotion is the natural function of the soul. If one does not engage in devotion, then one is killing the soul, committing suicide. The word *ātma-hā* in this verse means “one who commits suicide.” There is no greater sin than committing suicide. If one abandons the natural function of the soul— devotion is the life-being of the soul—then one commits a great sin, like suicide. The Ishopanishad also refers to the neglect of one’s spiritual life as suicide.

asuryā nāma te lokā

andhena tamasāvrtāh tāms te pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātma-hano janāh

Those worlds that are full of darkness and ignorance are known as the abode of the demoniac. This is where the killer of the soul goes after death. —

Ishopanishad 3

The word *ātma-hanah* in this verse is the plural of *ātma-hā*. The word *asuryā* means the frightful ignorance that is the destiny of the demons.

Andhena tamasāvrtāh— complete submersion in darkness, great suffering.

Pretya means after death, in the next world. In other words, such a person finds misery and suffering in the world of the demons after death. This is the message of the Vedas—the Ishopanishad is part of the Shukla Yajur Veda. If one does not follow this Vedic teaching, one has to fall into a hellish world of this sort. The Lord Himself takes human form—

krsnera jatek khelā sarvottama nara-līlā nara-vapu tāhār svarūp gopa-veśa, venu-kar nava-kiśor, nata-var nara-līlār hay anurūp

Of all Lord Krishna’s transcendental activities, His earthly pastimes in

the human form are most excellent, for this is His actual, eternal identity. In this form He dresses as a cowherd boy, plays the flute, blossoms with ever-fresh youthfulness and dances expertly. His activities resemble those of a human being. —*Madhya* 21.101

Krishna also took a human form as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in order to give humans the opportunity to serve Him directly. If we fail to understand His wish and refuse to worship the Lord, then what will be the result? When the Lord takes a human body and engages in human pastimes, this gives us a chance to get His mercy. The Lord Himself engages in human pastimes and He also gives us this human body. He thus makes everything suitable for rendering service to Him. The human body makes it possible to render service to Him in His human form and pastimes. We have attained this human form of life. This human body is the basis of serving the Lord. The Lord has made all of the senses suitable for His worship. It is like a boat meant to cross the ocean. He has, furthermore, taken up his place as the helmsman, the spiritual master. Krishna tells Uddhava,

ācāryam mām vijānīyāt nāvamanyeta karhicit martya-buddhyāsūyeta sarva-deva-mayo guruh

Know me to be the spiritual master. Never disrespect the spiritual master. Don't think of him as an ordinary mortal. If you think of him as an ordinary mortal, you will start to envy him. The guru is the sum total of all the gods. —
SB 11.17.27

sāksād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ kintu prabhor yah priya eva tasya vande guroh śrī-caranāravindam

According to the verdict of the revealed scriptures and saintly persons, the guru is honored as much as Krishna Himself, because he is dearest servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master. —*Gurv-astakam*, 7

This verse tells us what an amazing phenomenon the spiritual master really is. Saintly persons know that Krishna has appeared in the form of the guru. Krishna is the *visaya-vigraha*, the object of devotion, and the guru is nothing other than this *visaya-vigraha*.

It does not say that he is an incarnation or avatar, but *sāksād-dharitvena*—He is Krishna Himself.

All the scriptures say this. Though the spiritual master is the object of devotion, *t* *vigraha*, he takes on the appearance of a practitioner of devotion, or ashraya. He Himself practices devotion, and by so doing He teaches the jivas how to practice. This is guru-tattva. The teaching about the guru is not an easy one to grasp. I am not saying this to increase my own status, but am repeating what has been stated in all the scriptures. So, it is said that the Lord has given us this boat, this human form of life. He has also come in the form of the helmsman, the guru, to navigate. As the spiritual master, He makes what would ordinarily be impossible very easy. There is one more very important thing needed for crossing the ocean of material existence, and that is a favorable wind.

A wide river like the Yamuna is filled with large waves. The bigger the waves, the harder it is to sail across them. One also needs a favorable wind. Krishna here says that He also brings such a wind in the form of His mercy. In this way He is seeking to help us cross the material ocean. Thus He is the boat, He is the helmsman, and He is the favorable wind. If despite this favorable conjunction of circumstances, we do not even try to cross over the ocean of material existence, then we are committing the great sin of suicide. Every jiva that does not engage in devotional service to the Lord is responsible for his own spiritual death. The spiritual master teaches us: “Your mind is still attached to other desires—to philosophical understanding (jnana) and fruitive work (karma). Work is necessary, because without work, nothing happens.

But scripture says, *tat karma hari-tosanam*

—‘Real work means to act for the satisfaction of God.’ That is the meaning of work, so occupy yourself in that way. You must work, but at the same time you must renounce all attachment to the fruits of your activities. You must act for the pleasure of the Lord.”

And what is jnana? Sambandha, abhidheya and prayojana. Knowledge of these three things is real knowledge. With whom do we have an eternal relationship? To whom do I owe an eternal duty? And what is my ultimate goal in life? The goal or prayojana is love for God. The spiritual master teaches this, but he knows that in order to understand these matters, a certain amount of purity is necessary. He therefore begins by telling us to clean the mirror of the mind by chanting the Holy Name. As the impurities are removed from our minds and hearts it becomes possible for us to understand more subtle aspects of

theology and practice.

Other benefits *from* chanting *the* Holy Name

So that is the first benefit from the sacrifice of chanting the Holy Name—the cleansing of the mirror of the mind. Next, Mahaprabhu says —*bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpanam*.

This material world is like a great conflagration, a forest fire. The fire that comes of rubbing two pieces of sandalwood together is called *dāvāgni*. This kind of fire is very hot and causes great suffering to all who are caught in it. What kind of suffering is there in this material world? Well, for one, there are so many arguments and differences of opinion between people. All these disagreements become very dangerous and cause all kinds of suffering. One person says, “We must worship God.” Another says, “No, what is the use of such worship? It is all nonsense.” By chanting the Holy Name we are able to transcend such differences of opinion. The next benefit from the sacrifice of the Holy Name is *śreyah-kairava-candrikā-vitaranam*.

When the fire of material life has been extinguished, then we are blessed with all auspiciousness—the moonlight of auspiciousness. The cool rays of the rising moon cause the night lilies (*kairava*) to bloom.

The Holy Name is like the moon that causes the night-lily of all auspiciousness to bloom for us. The next benefit is *vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam*. There are many different kinds of material knowledge, but spiritual knowledge is something apart. It is like a wife, whose life or husband is the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Lord in his form of Krishna sankirtan is the husband of the wife of spiritual knowledge. So spiritual knowledge serves and follows the Holy Name wherever it goes. The next benefit is *ānandāmbudhi-varadhanam*—

The Holy Name causes the ocean of joy to overflow. In other words, It is an inexhaustible source of joy, a joy that knows no end, an inexhaustible ecstasy.

The word *vardhanam* means that this joy does not come just once and leave, but increases endlessly. The sixth benefit is *prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam*. At every moment, the Holy Name brings a taste of full ambrosia. Haridas Thakur used to chant twenty-four hours a day and still

would be surprised to see the sun come up. We, on the other hand, look at our beads and wonder how many rounds we still have left to do. Haridas chanted twenty-four hours a day, in constant ecstasy. He was sad to see the sun rise in the morning, whereas we can't wait to finish our rounds so that we can get rid of our beads. Haridas tasted the full nectar constantly because the Holy Name is the nectar of immortality. Do we experience this? All we are thinking of is when can we put our beads away. Finally, the Holy Name bathes the entire soul—*sarvātma-snapanam*. When one takes a bath, the entire body and all the senses feel refreshed and calm. In the same way, the Holy Name revives our eternal relationship with Krishna, refreshing our entire being. So we sing the glories of the Holy Name that has all these attributes—*param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-sankīrtanam*.

Srivas Angan is *the* sankirtan Rasa Sthali

Mahāprabhu flew the Holy Name's flag of victory in Srivas Angan. He started the sacrifice of the Holy Name, offered us all as an oblation into the fire, and gave us the chance to go to Vrindavan to participate in the Rasa Lila. All these things can be found in this one verse taught by Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. We are sitting here in Vrindavan, but only by remaining loyal to the spirit of the Srivas Angan, the place where Mahāprabhu inaugurated His Sankirtan pastimes, can we become qualified for residence in Vrindavan and enter the transcendental scene of Krishna's Rasa dance. The conclusion is that we can never abandon the chanting of the Holy Name. Therefore, in his teachings to Sanatan Goswami, Mahāprabhu said,

tānhā vistārita haūā phale prema phala inhā mālī sence nitya śravanādi jala

The creeper of devotional service grows luxuriantly and gives abundant fruits of divine love as it winds around Krishna's lotus feet. At the same time, the gardener goes on caring for the creeper by watering it with devotional practices like hearing and chanting about Krishna. —CC 2.19.155

Even after the creeper of devotion has reached the desire tree of Krishna's lotus

feet, the devotee gardener does not stop watering it with hearing and chanting about Krishna. Rupa and Sanatan Prabhus set the example of continually hearing and chanting in the state of complete purity. So devotees wander constantly all through Vrindavan, calling out to Rupa and Sanatan in order to learn from them how they performed bhajan. Rupa and Sanatan had no attachment to material pleasures.

mahāprabhura bhakta-ganera vairāgya pradhāna jāhā dekhi prīta hana gaura bhagavān

Renunciation is prominent in all of Mahaprabhu's devotees, seeing which Lord Gauranga is pleased. —3.6.220

And what was the nature of their renunciation? They would not even spend more than a single night at the foot of a tree, but would move on to spend the next night under another. They ate only dry bread. They were born princes in a brahmin family, Bharadvaj gotra Brahmins from Karnatak, and yet they lived like this. Raghunath Das Goswami was as rich as a king, but look at the way he led his life. Compare them to us: I am old and can't even get up from my bed, and still I am never satisfied, but am always saying, "I don't like this, I don't like that." What is the purpose of such renunciation? The answer is that if your desires for sense gratification are always increasing, you can't engage in Krishna bhajan. There is no use in faking it. We have to follow the example of the six Goswamis. We have to understand the basic reason for their renunciation. In fact the Goswamis are eternally perfected souls. They can do these things, but we cannot. We have neither the capacity to follow them, nor to imitate them either. Even if we wanted to imitate the way Rupa and Raghunath did their bhajan, we could not. So we should therefore take very seriously their judgment that there is no refuge other than the Holy Name. As we chant the Holy Name, the Name itself will reveal our spiritual destination.

īsat vikaśi punah dekhāya nija-rūpa-guna citta hari laya krsna pāśa pūrṇa vikaśita hañā vraje more jāya lañā dekhāya nija svarūpa vilāsa

When the Name is even slightly revealed, it shows me my spiritual form and characteristics. It steals my mind and leads it to Krishna's side. When the Name is fully revealed, it takes me directly to Vraja, where it shows me my personal role in the eternal pastimes. (Krsna-nāma dhare kata bala? Śaranāgati)

It seems that these verses by Bhaktivinode Thakur are always in my mind. We cannot ignore the Holy Name and expect to enter the Rasa sthali in Vrindavan. Sridhar Swamipad said that the Rasa Lila is the pastime whereby sexual desire is conquered—*kāma- vijayī līlā*. It is our nature to see nothing but

mundane sexual desire, but in these pastimes of Krishna there is not a drop of sexual desire. There is nothing there but pure love. The Lord is engaged in these pastimes with Radharani, His svarupa shakti. We look at these pastimes with eyes filled with sexual desire, and so that is all we see. Vrindavan is permeated with divine love and nothing else. But our understanding is different. And the reason for that is that we are not following the way of the Sankirtan Rasa sthali in Srivas Angan. As a result, when we come here, we don't see the real Vrindavan. Even in this holy land, our sexual desires are awakened. So we have to be careful that we follow in the spirit of sankirtan as manifested in Srivas Angan, for only then will we adopt the true mood of the Rasa sthali in Vrindavan and be able to enter there. We should endeavor to adopt this view of things. The sexual desire in Vraja is divine love. Krishna Das Kaviraj Goswami explains this in a verse that describes the true essence of all devotion —

ātmendriya prīti-vāñchā tāre bali kāma krsnendriya prīti icchā dhare prema nāma

Kama or lust is the desire to please one's own senses. The desire to please the senses of the Supreme Lord Krishna is known as prema. —

Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.4.165

The divine love of Vrindavan is based on the desire to please Krishna's senses. Other than that, there is no other desire. There is no material sex desire in Vrindavan. Therefore, if we want to live in this land of transcendental desire, this land of divine love, then we absolutely must be obedient to the spirit of the Srivas Angan, the Sankirtan Rasa sthali. Even here in the region of Vraja, we must follow the spirit of the region of Gauda. By following, we will come to Mahaprabhu and enter His pastime, and there we can pray to Him, "O Mahaprabhu! Please be merciful to us. Please allow us into the realm of divine love, Vrindavan. Let us enter the Rasa sthali in Vrindavan."

This, then, is what is meant by Narottam Das' verse—

śrī-gauda-mandala-bhūmi jeba jāne cintāmani tāra hoy braja-bhūme bās

Anyone who understands that the territory around Nabadwip is divine achieves residence in Vraja.

If I ignore the pastimes of Srivas Angan, if I don't meditate on those pastimes, but still think that I can enter Vrindavan, then I am mistaken. I will not be able to live in Vraja. If Mahaprabhu allows me to live here, through my submission to the pastime of Srivas Angan, then and only then will I be able to make my residence in Vraja a success.

*vāñchā-kalpa-tarubhyaś ca krpā-sindhubhya eva ca patitānām
pāvanebhyo vaisnavebhyo namo namah*

I bow down again and again to the Vaishnavas, who are wish-fulfilling trees, oceans of mercy and deliverers of the fallen.

If I did not engage in bhajan, but just acted like a cheater babaji, then no one would be more unfortunate than I. You are all Vaishnavas, so I ask you to bless me that I may remain surrendered to the pastimes of sankirtan as the Srivas Angan Rasa sthali. And that as a result I may have the good fortune to enter the transcendental place of the Rasa Lila in Vrindavan.

śrīla guru mahārāja kī jaya!

Transcending duality through service to the Lord

by His Divine Grace Srila B.P. Puri Maharaj

May the Lord give His blessings to everyone. May His grace rain down on you in incessant showers. May God bless us all that we may fully offer our souls in

sacrifice to His lotus feet.



Wisdom

In the Bhagavad Gita there is a series of verses where Krishna describes wisdom and the means for attaining it:

asaktir anabhisvangah putra-dāra-grhādisu nityam ca sama-cittatvam istānistopapattisu

One should be detached from one's relationships with one's wife and family; one should not be too dependent on them for happiness. One should seek mental equilibrium in all circumstances, whether good or bad. —*Gita* 13.9

When anything happens to us, good or bad, we have to remain constant—*nityam ca sama-*

cittatvam istānistopapattisu. If we desire something good (*ista*), and then lose it, circumstances come and go, but if we are overly attached to the good times, we will suffer when they are gone. So Krishna tells us that we must try to maintain mental equilibrium. But in order to transcend all the vicissitudes of life, we have to find our spiritual center in the service of God. This is the meaning and purpose of our lives as human beings.

The meaning of human life

The human form of life is very important. The opportunities we get as human beings are not available in any other kind of body. The Supreme Lord has been kind enough to give us this most valuable chance, and yet we have forgotten what is the very basis of human life. We have forgotten where our real roots lie.

srstvā purāṇi vividhāny ajayātma-śaktyā vrksān sarīsrpa-paśūn khaḡa-dandaśūkān tais tair atusta-hrdayah purusam vidhāya brahmāvaloka-dhisanam mudam āpa devah

With the help of His Maya potency, the Supreme Lord created this visible world with its trees, serpents, animals, birds and other creatures, yet His heart remained discontented. Then He created man, who alone possesses the intelligence to see Brahman, and was delighted. —SB 11.9.28

The Lord of the universe used His creative power Maya to bring the trees, serpents, animals, birds and other creatures into existence, but did not find satisfaction in this accomplishment. When He created the human form of life, however, He was overjoyed. This is because He has invested only the human form of life with *brahmāvaloka-dhisanam*, the intelligence (*dhisanam*) to seek out a direct vision (*avalokana*) of the supreme spiritual truth (*brahman*). Therefore, in the following verse, the Lord goes on to say,

labdhvā sudurlabham idam bahu-sambhavānte mānusyam arthadam anityam apīha dhīrah tūrnām yateta na pated anumrtyu yāvat nihsreyasāya visayah khalu sarvatah syāt

After many, many births, one is finally born in a human body, which provides a most rare and valuable opportunity to attain the supreme goal. Even so, this body is temporary, so one who is wise will not waste time, but immediately apply himself to finding that which provides the supreme good in all times and circumstances. One should never give up this effort, not even at the very moment of death. —SB 11.9.29

Worldly sense objects are available in every form of life, but the opportunity

to worship the Lord can only be found when one has been born as a human being. This is a very rare form of life, but the Lord has mercifully made it available to us. Nevertheless, we have one important problem—not even the life of a human being lasts forever. Like a drop of water about to fall from a lotus leaf, it may come to an end at any moment. An intelligent person is careful not to lose any good opportunity, and will certainly not fritter away the chance to attain the supreme auspiciousness. We should therefore not waste any time (*tūrnaṁ yateta*) in taking advantage of the intelligence available to us in this human form of life. The Bhagavata tells us that this is an opportunity that comes only after going through many, many births (*labdhvā sudurlabham idam bahu-sambhavānte*). There are 8,400,000 species of life, eight million of which are in the various other lower forms. Then there are 400,000 types of humans, but many of these are karmis, jnanis—only a few are devotees of the Lord. Without the special mercy of the Lord and His devotees, this most rare form of life cannot be obtained. So it is not a sign of great intelligence to throw away the great mercy that has been given us as human beings.

Don't say, "It can wait"

As far as making proper use of this opportunity, Bhaktivinode Thakur has sung the following song, in which he emphasizes the importance of not wasting even a moment's time—

*jīvana samāpta-kāle kariba bhajana ebe kari grha-sukha kakhano e-kathā
nāhi bale vijñā-jana e-deha patanonmukha*

A wise person never says, "I shall chant the Holy Names when my life is coming to an end, but for the time being, let me just enjoy my life as a householder." He knows that the body is always on the brink of death.

*āji vā śateka varse avaśya marana niścinta nā thāka bhāi jata śīghra pāro bhajo
śrī-kṛṣṇa-carana jīvanera thik nāi*

Death will come, my brother, whether it is today or in a hundred years, so do not be apathetic. Worship Krishna as soon as you can, for a long life is not a certainty. *samsāra nirvāha kari jāba āmi vrndāvana rna-traya
śodhibāre karitechī sujatana e āśāya nāhi prayojana*

Do not think, "I will go and live in Vrindavan after I have taken care of all my household responsibilities and repaid the three kinds of debts [to the saints, gods, and ancestors]."

emana durāsā vaśe jābe prāna avaśese nā haibe dīna-bandhu-carana-sevana

If you keep trying to play both sides of the fence, when death comes you will not have served the feet of the Lord, the friend of the destitute.

jadi sumangala cāo sadā kṛṣṇa-nāma gāo grhe thāko vane thāko ithe tarka akāraṇa

If you are interested in achieving the ultimate benefit of life, then always sing the names of Krishna. You need not concern yourself about whether or not to renounce family life. —*Kalyāṇa-kalpa-taru, Sambandhābhidheya-prajñā, 4*

The conclusion is that we should take up the Lord’s bhajan as quickly as possible, without wasting any time whatsoever. That is the instruction of the Bhagavatam. As the Srimad Bhagavatam is the sacred revelation retrieved in trance by Vyasa-deva, it is the quintessence of all revealed scriptures. As such, we should take its instructions very seriously.

The descent of the Bhagavatam

In ancient times, one of the Lord’s portions, Vyasa-deva, was born in this land of Bharatavarsha. Vyasa was a śakty-āveśa avatāra, an empowered incarnation of the Lord. So, the Lord Himself appeared on this earth as Vyasa-deva and took up residence in the Samyaprasa ashram, where he dedicated himself to writing so many books. He started by dividing the Veda into four sections to make it more manageable; then he wrote the great epic, the Mahabharata, and then the Puranas. Because he wrote so many texts describing the various goals of human life, from duty, to success, to pleasure and liberation, Vyasa-deva is considered to be the great authority in India. That is why in our country we say “the words of Vyasa” or “the words of the Veda” when we want to say something is the absolute truth. The word of Vyasa is the word of God and we must respect the word of God. Even so, despite having done all this work, Vyasa was still not satisfied. And so he began to wonder whether his dissatisfaction was the result of not having sufficiently described the process of worship to the Supreme Lord. While he was trying to fathom the causes of his distress in this way, Narada Rishi suddenly came on the scene, as if he had been summoned. Narada Rishi was Vyasa’s guru and is said to be the Lord’s incarnation in the form of a devotee. He has the ability to go everywhere. After he had been appropriately greeted by his disciple, he said,

“Vyasa, you have accomplished so much, and yet you are still depressed. Tell me why you have not been able to find peace of mind. Why are you sitting here in this unhappy state?”

Vyasa answered, “Master, all that you say is true. I have done so many things meant to benefit mankind, and yet I have not been able to find satisfaction in my heart.” Narada then went on, “Yes, it seems that you have accomplished a great deal, but allow me to tell you one thing: It all amounts to practically nothing. For though you have given detailed descriptions of the four goals of life—duty, worldly success, sense enjoyment and liberation—you have said practically nothing about the glories of the Lord.” Inspired by the words of his guru, Vyasadeva began to meditate until he had a vision of the Supreme Lord that led him to write the Srimad Bhagavatam. There he showed that beyond the goals of life centered on this world, our true purpose is to engage in the service of the Supreme and simply surrender to Me.”

Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur said that *sarvadharmān* refers to the duties of Varnashram Dharma. God Himself established the Varnashram Dharma as a way of organizing society, which is a necessity— *cāturvarnyam mayā srstam guna-karma-vibhāṣah*.

But now, Varnashram Dharma as an organizing principle for society is no longer applicable. The idea of a division of human society according to qualities and work has been lost. A person in one profession may have a son who takes up another. A doctor’s son becomes a lawyer, and vice-versa. So let our only promise be to exclusively follow Vyasadeva’s ultimate conclusion. The quintessence of all the scriptures is the Gita and the Bhagavatam. And the Bhagavatam is the essence of the Gita. Therefore Mahaprabhu accepted the Bhagavatam as the most authoritative scripture, the only authoritative scripture. We have to try to follow the Bhagavatam, and at the same time follow the Gita in the light of the Bhagavatam.

The wonder of creation

I began this talk with the verse *srstvā purāṇi vividhāni*—the Supreme Lord created so many forms of life, but was not happy until he had created the human form. He was not satisfied even after having made all these other forms of life—plants, snakes, animals, birds, insects, worms—only the human form of life brought Him joy. This is a special, wondrous thing. We have all heard of the seven wonders of the world, but nothing is more wonderful than

the spirit soul. The Śvetāśvatara Upanishad describes the soul in the following way—

bālāgra-śata-bhāgasya śatadhā kalpitasya ca bhāgo jīvah sa vijñeyah sa cānantyāya kalpate

The Upanishad says here that if you take the tip of a hair and cut it into a hundred pieces, and then cut it again another hundred times, that is the size of the soul. When we see something moving, we say or think that this is the living entity, but that is not entirely correct. Somewhere within that body is an infinitesimal particle of spiritual energy; a tiny spark of consciousness within the heart, too small to see or even imagine. A hundredth part of the tip of a hair divided another hundred times—that is the size of the individual spirit soul. It is subtle like an electric current, which no one can see.

Nowadays, scientists are capable of so many amazing feats. They can make computers and do many other wonderful things as a result of their extensive scientific researches. In America, of course, the sciences are far more advanced than they are here in India, but still we must remember the fundamental limits on human creativity. Life itself, what to speak of human life, lies outside the creative capacity of human beings. There is one statement in the Vedānta Sūtra that especially refers to this limitation—*jagad-vyāpāra-varjam* (4.4.17). Scientists were not around when the universe was created. Nor could they ever create such a universe out of nothing. Once, when I was in Mathura, I saw a tree with flowers of five different colors, even though they were all of one species. This was in Gokula, where Krishna was born—a single species of flower, in a single tree, but with five different colors. Such amazing natural manifestations are all miraculous, and however we explain them, lie ultimately beyond our understanding. Human nature is such, however, that as soon as we accumulate a little understanding about the workings of the material world, we immediately think we have become totally independent of God’s creative power.

Krishna is the source of all things

Though as human beings we are an extraordinary manifestation of God’s creation, we ourselves cannot create in the same way. That is the work of the Supreme Lord. That is why Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita—

*aham sarvasya prabhavo mattah sarvam pravartate matvā bhajante mām
budhā bhāva-samanvitāh*

I am the source of all things, for everything emanates from Me. The wise who know this perfectly engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts. —Gita 10.7

The atheists have no power to create themselves, but when it comes to worshipping the Lord, they ask, “What is the point?” They think that we have arisen out of the material nature, even though nature is unconscious, and since we have come into existence spontaneously there is no need of worshipping God. The Lord, however, says,

*mayādhyaksena prakṛtiḥ sūyate sa-carācaram hetunānena kaunteya jagad
viparivartate*

Under My direction and control, O Son of Kunti, Nature brings forth the moving and stationary beings. This is the cause of the repeated creation and destruction of the universe. —Gita 9.10

The Lord says material nature and all its moving and non-moving beings are created under His direction. He just has to glance at the material nature and it starts its work. He does not even have to make any extraordinary effort. Material nature is the womb into which the Lord impregnates life. Therefore, human beings play no role in creation. Man can pull and tug and extract something out of Nature, just as one can use scissors to cut shapes out of a piece of paper, but there are limits to what he can do. He cannot create material nature itself. In fact, he cannot even create true intelligence, which is something given by the Lord. As Krishna states in the Gita—

buddhim buddhimatām asmi balam balavatām aham
—“I am the intelligence of the intelligent, the strength of the strong.” (Gita 7.10)

Again, in the Upanishads it is said of material nature:

māyām tu prakṛtim vidyān māyīnam ca maheśvaram

Know that material nature is illusion and that I, the Supreme Lord, am the creator of this illusion. —*Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*. 4.10

The Supreme Lord (*maheśvara*) is the master of the material energy or Maya. He is called “Mayin,” the great magician. He is the creator, who makes use of the material energy to create. It is for this reason that the

Lord says, *aham sarvasya prabhavaḥ*

—“I am the source of the entire universe, filled with moving and non-moving creatures. Everything arises from Me.” Such creation is not within the power of man, who is incapable of creating even a single hair out of nothing. There is a Bengali proverb, “You can’t catch a worm, but you’re hunting cobras!” This is why we must always bow down our heads before the Lord.

The word *prabhava*, means the “place of origin.” So Krishna is the place of origin or source. He has created the jivas, the individual living entities with their limited powers.

This jiva is also called the *tatastha śakti*, because he can not only be elevated, but can also go in the opposite direction. It is like the water in the ocean, which sometimes goes below the surface in the undertow and at other times rises to the surface on the crest of a wave. The water can go both ways—either driving in toward the shore with the waves, or flowing back out to the sea with the undercurrent. This is the way the marginal potency of the Lord works. It is not the doing of man himself, who cannot create. So we have no right to be puffed up and say we will not worship God. Our relation to God is not immediately apparent to us, but the Lord says, “I am the source of everything. Out of Me, everything arises.” Everything is given by God, and whatever He has given must be used in His service. But rather than doing that, we simply become puffed up and say, “What do I need to worship God for? Material nature is and does everything.”

Gross *and* subtle bodies

I have this body, but what is it made of? It is a product of the material nature, being composed of the five great elements—earth, water, fire, air, and ether. Besides this, I have a subtle body of mind, intelligence and ego. This subtle body is not destroyed as easily as the gross body. In the Gita, Krishna says—

*śarīram yad avāpnoti yac cāpy utkrāmatīśvarah grhītvaitāni samyāti vāyur
gandhān ivāśayāt*

“When the master of the body [the individual soul] leaves it to take another, he carries with him his mind and the subtle senses, just like a breeze carries the fragrance from a flower.”

Let us say there is a jasmine bush in a garden somewhere. The flowers on the bush are blossoming and their fragrance enters our nostrils. The odor is a subtle aspect of the flower. It comes to us even when the flower itself does not. This example illustrates how the subtle body passes from one gross body to another. Throughout our lives, we are busily shaping another body, so that when our work here has been completed and we have to leave it, we go to the other body that we have been preparing with our actions in this one. In other words, once all the results of our activities in previous lives that were destined for this body have been suffered or enjoyed, then it is time to leave it. We give up this body in great distress, but when it falls away here in this world, we leave it with our subtle body and enter another body. Wherever we go, we suffer or enjoy the consequences of our previous actions with the new set of external senses that we possess. Joy and suffering, happiness or distress. These are the workings of this world—*jagad-vyāpāra*—over which no one, not even the greatest scientists, has any control. This is a law that no one can challenge.

The true identity of the soul

It is not that the soul only exists in India and not anywhere else. The soul is not something different in Europe or America. Human beings are human, in this country or in any other. There may be differences of skin color—some are darker and some lighter. In the colder countries like yours, people are white; in countries where there is more sun, people are darker. This is not a significant difference. But what is the true identity of the soul? What does Mahaprabhu say? “I am not a Brahmin, but a pure spiritual being. I not a

brahmin, not a kshatriya, not a vaishya nor a shudra. Nor can I be identified with my station in life—I am not a brahmachari, householder, vanaprastha or sannyasi. My true identity has nothing to do with this gross body.” Then what am I? Mahaprabhu goes on, “My true identity is that I am the most insignificant servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of Krishna, the lover of the gopis and overflowing ocean of supreme and immortal joy.” (CC 2.13.80, Padyavali 74). This is the true identity of the soul.

*nāham vipro na ca narapatir nāpi vaiśyo na śūdro nāham varnī na ca
grhapatir no vanastho yatir vā kintu prodyan-nikhila-paramānanda-
pūrnāmrtābdher gopī-bhartuh pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsah CC 2.13.80*

Sanatan Goswami once asked of Mahaprabhu, “What is the ultimate goal of life and how does one achieve it?” The Lord at first replied with a compliment, saying, “You know everything, but even so, it is in the nature of a seeker to ask questions in order to confirm what he already knows. So I will tell you.” And so the Lord began his discourse, beginning with these words about the soul that form the cornerstone of His teachings— *jīvera svarūpa haya krsnera nitya dāsa*: “The true identity of the soul is to be a servant of Krishna.” In your countries, there are so many intelligent people who have made great scientific discoveries. I am not a scientist and so I cannot comment on them, but I can say that even their intelligence has been given them by God. So there is no way that any of us, no matter where we are from, can arrogantly disregard the Supreme Lord. You have to accept. If not, you will ultimately be obliged to accept him. The individual living being can serve as an instrument to creation, but he cannot do so independently. Parents can bring about the birth of children, but not without each other. This is true wherever you go. There is no other means of reproduction for people of any race or color.

Krishna ordains *the* duties of all living beings

Krishna also ordains the activities and duties of all living beings. The Bhagavatam says,

dharmam tu sāksād bhagavat-pranītam na vai vidur rsayo nāpi devāh na

siddha-mukhyā asurā manusyāh kuto nu vidyādhara-cāranādayah

Religious duties have been established by God Himself. Thus no one really knows them in full—not the rishis, demigods, perfected beings, demons or humans, what to speak of the Vidyadharas or the Charanas. —6.3.18

The conclusion is that human beings cannot ignore the Supreme Lord. There is no way that human beings can be atheist. It is sheer obstinacy to say, “I don’t believe in God.” One who does so is a fool who factually understands nothing. If we consider these things carefully, we will come to the conclusion that the words of the Gita and Bhagavata must be accepted, at every moment. At every moment— actually I am using the word *muhūrta*, which refers to a period of 48 minutes, but the fact is that with every ingoing and outgoing breath—we must accept the lotus feet of the Lord as true. This means that human beings have no other duty—no other duty—than the worship of the Supreme Lord. The Lord says,

ekam śāstram devakī-putra-gītam eko devo devakī-putra eva ekam mantram tasya nāmāni yāni karmāpy ekam tasya devasya sevā

There is only one scripture—the one sung by the son of Devaki. There is only one worshipable deity—the same son of Devaki. There is only one mantra—made up of His names.

And there is only one duty—to serve the son of Devaki.

It is thus completely necessary to worship the Lord.

Descent *into* ignorance

Here in this world, wealth comes and sometimes it goes. When we have money, we get all puffed up and think, “Now I am rich and powerful.” And when it’s gone, I cry with grief and desperation. But what does it all really mean? Nothing. What I am getting at, though, is that it is the duty of every living being to engage in the worship of the Lord. The words of the Ishopanishad are there to remind us of what happens if we fail in this duty:

asuryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasāvrtāh tāms te pretyābhigacchanti ye ke

cātmā-hano janāh

All those who commit spiritual suicide descend into the worlds of the demoniac after death, being covered by the darkness of ignorance. —*Ishopanishad*, 3

The word *ātma-hanah* is a Vedic locution for “suicide.”

In Bengali, we would say, *ātma-ghātī*.

The word *asuryā* is somewhat unusual. It is spelt with a dental “s” and a short “u,” and not the palatal “ś” or long “ū,” derived from the word *asura*, “demon.” In other words, those who do not worship the Lord must go to the destination of the asuras, a fearful place of terrible suffering, full of darkness and ignorance. This means that after death, they are destined to undergo lives full of pain and misery. This is how things work. Everything that happens to us comes about in accordance with the law of karma. One person accumulates money and thinks he is rich; another cannot rub two pennies together and thinks he is poor. The intelligent, therefore, do not pay too much attention to such purely external matters that have nothing to do with God. Our only real worry should be about how we will engage in devotional service to the Lord. We have to make a living, no doubt, and there is nothing wrong with that. If we don’t work to earn an honest living, the world will not go on. But we have to consider what the money is for.

This is why Shankaracharya said, *artham anartham bhāvaya nityam* —“Always remember that money is the source of problems.” Money is necessary, but we must use it properly. Our wealth is properly used when we spend it in connection with the Lord. This is true everywhere, whether one is here or in some other country.

Using god’s wealth *in the* service of God

Everything is given by God, and whatever He has given must be used in His service. But rather than doing that, we simply become puffed up and say, “What do I need to worship God for? Material nature is and does

everything.” Srila Prabhupada often made this point. He would say, “I need an airplane, so that I can fly around the world to preach. Give me a steamship and I will sail around the world to preach on land and sea.” Srila Prabhupada was very enthusiastic about spreading the message of Lord Chaitanya everywhere. He would

give the following analogy: “Why should I be the only one to eat? I am sitting at the banquet of love of God and I must share it. It is not proper for me to enjoy all these riches by myself.” In the Chaitanya Charitamrita, Krishna Das says that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was the gardener of love. He planted an orchard of prema, the fruits of which He Himself relished as they ripened and fell— *prema phala pāki’ pade mālī āsvādaya*. But He was not satisfied to simply enjoy them on His own. He said,

ekalā mālākāra āmi kāhān kāhān jāba ekalā vā kata phala pāiyā bilāba

“I am only the gardener, but I am all alone, so how many different places can I go? How many fruits can I pick and give away by Myself?

ekalā uthāñā dite haya parīśrama keha pāya keha nā pāya rahe mane bhrama

“It is extremely tiring to have to gather up the fruits and distribute them by Myself. It disturbs Me to know that some people will receive these fruits and others will not.

ataeva āmi ājñā dilun sabākāre jāhān tāhān prema-phala deha jāre tāre

“I therefore order everyone within to distribute these fruits of love everywhere, giving them to anyone and everyone.

khāiyā ha-uk loka ajara amare sukhī haiyā loka more gāibe kīrti

“Let people eat these fruits and be free from the effects of old age and death. When they become happy in this way, they will thank and glorify Me.” — *Chaitanya Charitamrita* 1.9.34-37

Chaitanya the gardener does not say, “I will only distribute the fruit to Brahmins and to no one else.” He does not forbid anyone else to touch these fruits. No, he does not say anything of the sort! He is the mahā-vadānya avatāra—the most munificent incarnation. How generous He is! He is the Supreme Lord Krishna Himself, who has taken the form of Mahaprabhu in order to give love for Himself to everyone. So He concludes:

bhārata-bhūmite haila manusya janma yāra janma sārthaka kariñ kara para-upakāra

One who has taken his birth as a human being in the holy land of India [Bharatavarsha] should make a success of his life and work for the wellbeing of others.” —*Chaitanya Charitamrita* 1.9.41

If we are able to make a little more money than we are making at present, it will not make much difference to the amount of happiness or distress we experience. The real measure of our happiness is in how much we advance in worshipping the Lord. We must all seriously consider these matters.

Through His incarnation, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has facilitated things even more for us in this age of Kali. So, don't waste any time and take shelter of the Holy Name as quickly as you can. Chant the Holy Name, and if you avoid the offenses to the Holy Name, you can very quickly become successful in this life by attaining prema, divine love of God.

☐ **Short Darshans** ☐

by His Divine Grace Srila B.P. Puri Maharaj

Minaketan Ramdas

Devotee: Who was Minaketan Ramdas in Krishna lila?

Guru Maharaj: Minaketan Ramdas was a great devotee of Nityananda Prabhu who took great pleasure in chanting His name. This does not mean that he did not love Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, but simply that he had special affection for Nityananda. In *Gaura-ganoddeśa-dīpikā*, verse 68, it even says that Minaketan Ramdas is an expansion of

Sankarshan, though it does not specify what role he played in Krishna’s pastimes. Krishna Das Kaviraj tells a most beautiful story about this great devotee in the course of glorifying Nityananda Prabhu’s mercy:

*avadhūta gosāñhira eka bhrtya prema-dhāma mīnaketana rāmadāsa haya tānra
nāma āmāra ālaye ahorātra sankīrtana tāmhāte āila temho pāñā nimantrana*

Nityananda Prabhu had a disciple, an abode of love whose name was Minaketan Ramdas. Once I [Krishna Das Kaviraj] held a sankirtan festival at my house that was to last all day and night. Minaketan Ramdas came there at my invitation. — CC 1.5.161-162

*gunārnava miśra nāme eka vipra ārya śrī-mūrti-nikate temho kare sevā-
kārya angane āsiyā tenho nā kaila sambhāsa tāhā dekhi’ kruddha haūā bale
rāmadāsa ei to dvitīya sūta romaharasana baladeva dekhi je nā kaila
pratyudgama*

On that occasion, a pure brahmin named Gunarnava Mishra was acting as the pujari and was busily engaged in was serving the Deity. When he came into the courtyard, however, Gunarnava Mishra did not speak to Minaketan. Seeing this, Minaketan Ramdas became angry and spoke the following words: “This man is another Romaharshan Suta, who did not stand to receive Lord Balaram on seeing him.” —CC 1.5.168-170

eta bali nāce gāya, karaye santosa krsna-kārya kare vipra nā karila rosa

After saying this, Minaketan danced and sang to his heart’s content. The brahmin did not become angry, however, for he was too busily engaged in serving Lord Krishna. —CC 1.5.171

Gunarnava Mishra was a good man, but he just lacked common sense. Krishna Das’ brother was also present there at this time. He, on the other hand, had devotion for Chaitanya Mahaprabhu but none for Nityananda. As a result, Ramdas responded to him differently.

*kruddha hoye vamsī bhenge cale rāmadāsa sei haite āmāra bhrātāra hoy sarva-
nāśa* Ramdas broke his flute in anger and left. So from that day on, my

brother was doomed. —CC 1.5.178

Minaketan Ramdas was incited to leave by the offensive attitude of Krishna Das' brother. Disappointed that a respected guest had been offended, Krishna Das also got angry and started to chastise his brother, saying, "Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda cannot be separated from one another. So how is it you honor the one, but not the other? This is called the logic of accepting 'half a hen'—*ardha-kukkuti-nyāya*." So, as a result of this error in understanding, his brother was doomed, meaning that he was forever deprived of pure devotion. Not long after these events, Nityananda appeared to Krishna Das in a dream and said, "O Krishna Das! Go to Vrindavan. There you will find everything your heart desires." Kaviraj then reports in the Chaitanya Charitamrita, "By coming here to Vrindavan, I was able to find Rupa and Sanatan. It was here that I found Raghunath Das and Svarupa Damodar. All my heart's desires have indeed been fulfilled in Vrindavan as a result of Nityananda Prabhu's mercy." The lesson here is this: Who are Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu? The fact is that they are none other than Krishna and Balaram. Mahaprabhu is Krishna Himself; He is the combined form of Radha and Krishna—Lord Krishna Himself. And Krishna's brother Balaram became Nityananda Prabhu. Nityananda is thus Mahaprabhu's brother. As such, we can never attain Mahaprabhu without Nityananda's intercession. Most people do not seem to understand these matters, but without Balaram's mercy, no one can attain Krishna. Another name for Balaram is Dauji, which means "older brother," that is, Krishna's older brother. We have our Dauji temple in Vrindavan. Dauji is a tremendous spiritual truth; without Balaram no one attains Krishna. Krishna Das says, "I chastised my brother, and that is why Nityananda Prabhu appeared to me. I beheld Him in His form as Balaram, holding the plough and mace. And on giving me this vision, He said, 'O Krishna Das, go to Vrindavan, where all your heart's desires will be fulfilled. There you will find everything you are seeking.' " As far as Gunarnava Mishra is concerned, he was only interested in worshiping the Lord's deity form. This means that he belongs to the lowest class of devotee, the *prākṛta bhakta*.

arcāyām eva haraye pūjām yah śraddhayehate na tad-bhaktesu cānyesu sa bhaktah prākṛtah smrtah

One who worships the Lord in His deity form with faith, but does not revere the Lord's devotees or other living beings, is called a mundane devotee. —
SB 11.2.47

Such neophyte devotees are ready to worship the Lord, but not the

Lord’s devotee. Until one has developed faith in the Lord’s devotees, he will only be engaged in a superficial kind of Deity worship. There is another, similar verse—

arcayitvā tu govindam tadīyān nārcayet tu yah na sa bhāgavato jñeyah kevalam dāmbhikah smrtah

One who worships Govinda without worshipping those who are connected to Him cannot be considered a true devotee. In fact, he is nothing more than a hypocrite. —HBV 10.362

If I accept the Lord on the one hand, but on the other don’t revere His devotees, then the Lord will not accept my worship. People who are like this are just hypocrites. You have to become a devotee, a pure devotee, but you also have to worship the pure devotee or you will never succeed. You cannot love Krishna without loving those who love Him. This has been discussed extensively in the course of Mahaprabhu’s conversation with Raya Ramananda.

duhkha-madhye kona duhkha haya gurutara? krsna-bhakta-viraha vinā duhkha nāhi dekhi para

The Lord asked, “What is the most painful kind of suffering?” Ramananda Raya replied, “I know of nothing more unbearable than separation from the devotees of Krishna.” —CC 2.8.248

śreyo-madhye kona śreyah jīvera haya sāra? krsna-bhakta-sanga vinā śreyah nāhi āra

The Lord asked, “What is the most auspicious and beneficial activity for the living entity?” Ramananda Raya replied, “There is nothing more auspicious than association with the devotees of Krishna.” —2.8.251

Mahaprabhu’s Kirtan

Guru Maharaj: Hare Krishna! How wonderful Gaur Nitai's sankirtan lila is! Sr used to call Srivas Angan the Sankirtan Rasa Sthali. He said, if we can enter this Rasa Sthali, then we will be also be able to find a place in Krishna's Rasa Sthali in Vrindavan and participate in the Rasa dance there. You have all come from so far away to participate in this sankirtan pastime. Unfortunately the people who are living right here in Bengal, Mahaprabhu's own land, have no interest in worshiping Him. This truly is the Kali Yuga, the "Iron Age"! All I can do is glorify Bhaktivinode Thakur. Why? Because he was the one who prayed, like Mahaprabhu, that we Bengalis should not be the only ones to relish the fruits of love of God. He prayed that everyone should get a taste. It was his wish that everyone in the world would come and drink this nectar. By Bhaktivinode Thakur's mercy you have come to me. It is by his grace that I have found all of you.

A disciple: In the Chaitanya Charitamrita, there is no detailed description of Mah Nabadwip kirtans. Devotees were only able to participate in those kirtans by invitation, so some people would not be allowed in. We would like to know more about those secret kirtans.

Guru Maharaj: It's all in Chaitanya Charitamrita. Mahaprabhu chanted kirtan ev He even went to South India, doing kirtan all the way. The first year all the devotees went to see Mahaprabhu in Puri, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya took King Prataparudra onto the roof and pointed out the devotees and named each of them as they went past. They had come the hundreds of miles from Bengal chanting kirtan all the way. This took place just before the Rathayatra. One by one, Sarvabhauma indicated each of them, saying, "Here is Advaita Acharya," and so on. He showed all the devotees to Prataparudra, explaining the rhythms and songs they were singing. All this amazed the King. He was completely astonished at the way they looked and sounded.

Disciple: What kind of kirtan were they doing, Maharaj? Is there a specific descr of the kirtan each one of these devotees was doing?

Guru Maharaj: Their kirtan was loud and extraverted. Advaita Acharya played the kartals. Mahaprabhu's devotees only used kartals and mridanga. They did not have the harmonium. Nowadays everyone uses the harmonium, but they did not have such instruments back then. Only khol and kartal.

Disciple: What songs did they sing, Maharaj? Did they sing the Hare Krishna ma or something else?

Guru Maharaj: The Hare Krishna mantra. They would sing this mantra in so many different tunes. You can sing the Hare Krishna mantra with any tune.

Disciple: Did they only sing the Hare Krishna mantra, or were there other songs as well?

Guru Maharaj: The Mahajans have written so many songs that can also be sung in kirtan. Mahaprabhu certainly sang such kirtans, too, but the Maha Mantra was most important. The Hare Krishna mantra was the principal kirtan. Many of Mahaprabhu's associates were excellent singers, like Vasu Ghosh and others. I myself was a kirtan singer in my day. I would lead the kirtans. I even sang on All India Radio. But now I am old and my voice is a joke. I sound like a duck!

In Mahaprabhu's time there would be seven "sampradayas" or groups of singers performing kirtan in front of Lord Jagannath during the Rathayatra. In each of these groups there would be one lead singer, while someone else would be the designated dancer. Sometimes all these groups would all come together in one place to form a single group, and sometimes they would split up and sing separately. Other than what I have read in the Chaitanya Charitamrita, however, I have no personal experience of such kirtan. On the other hand, when Srila Prabhupada was present among us, we would chant during the Rathayatra directly in front of Jagannath's cart. We were even allowed inside the police cordon, which was a privilege not given to everyone. We sang the verses from Chaitanya Charitamrita—

*anyera hrdaya man, mora mana vrndāvana, mane vane eka kari jāni tāhān
tomār pada-dvaya, karāha yadi udaya, tabe tomār pūrṇa kṛpā māni*

For others, the mind is the heart within, but my mind is Vrindavan; I consider my inner being and Vrindavan to be one and the same. Were you to place Your lotus feet there in Vrindavan, I would deem it the fullest expression of Your mercy. —CC 2.13.137

What is happening in this kirtan? Radharani has seen Krishna and is talking about His mercy—how She would like to see Him express His mercy. For others, the mind is the heart, the inner self. Krishna may say sometimes identify it with Mathura or something else, but Radha says, "My mind is always absorbed in the thoughts and moods of Vrindavan. If You were to return there as

a cowherd boy, giving up all these royal accoutrements, if you were to just return to Me in Vrindavan and bring Me to the kadamba tree, if You were to just stand next to Me by the banks of the Yamuna, then I know that this would be the fullest manifestation of Your mercy to Me. If not, then all your clever statements and trickery are a waste of time and will not console our grief.” After saying these things, Radharani started to cry. This was Mahaprabhu’s kirtan at the Rathayatra.

Books Maharaj would like *to* see done

Previously in the Bagbazar Math, Sundarananda Vidyavinode was my supervisor. He used to have great affection for me. He was the editor of the *Gaud* and I was his student. We all had great respect for him. I used to work under him. Of course, he has now departed. It was my desire that something be done on the life of Mahaprabhu in the way that you have done *Heart of Krishna*. It would be good if it were translated in Bengali. But we need another writer. Everything is in the Chaitanya Charitamrita. There is so much information there. There are also many events and much glorification of Mahaprabhu in the Chaitanya Bhagavata. So, it would be very nice if we could combine the material from these two biographies to make an integrated account of Chaitanya’s life. There is another article that was published in *Chaitanya Vani* called *Bhramana*.

We traveled through northern India (*Aryavarta*) and the South and I gave an account of that trip in this article. We had to go to all those places and take photos. It was a huge undertaking. I am now feeling a great deal of regret. I have been suffering poor health for the last four years—particularly from pneumonia and bronchitis. I was first attacked by pneumonia here in Jagannath Puri, at Chakra Tirtha. That was in July 1994, at the time of Rathayatra festival. It has dogged me ever since, causing me to feel as though I am suffocating. It is evident that my body is ruined. Nothing is left of it. Even so, it is my great wish that your desire to publish many books is fulfilled. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find a single good writer to carry on my work. I cannot do everything myself, especially not in English. I can manage in Bengali, but am completely incapable of doing anything in English. I cannot speak in English. Nor am I accustomed to doing so. Once, long ago, I used to be able to speak fluently, but since then I have forgotten it all. Krishna spoke in the language of

Braj, while Mahaprabhu spoke in Bengali. Bengali is derived entirely from Sanskrit. Sanskrit is India's original language, just as Greek and Latin are the original languages of Europe. Bengali and Hindi were born out of Sanskrit, as were so many other Indian languages. There are some exceptions, like Tamil and Telugu, whose Sanskrit origins are not as easy to trace. Even so, those who know etymology say that they can discern the Sanskrit derivations of various words. You should try to learn two languages— Krishna's language, or Brajbhasha, and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's language, Bengali.

Forgiveness

The spiritual master can forgive. He can pardon a disciple's offenses with just a word. Our Srila Prabhupada had so many disciples who committed numerous indiscretions. But even if they were at fault, he still forgave them. It is the spiritual master's prerogative to forgive. You have made me president of the Gopinath Gaudiya Math. If you have done so, it must be because I have some qualification. As the president, I have certain powers, including the right to absolve a disciple of his transgressions. Someone may commit an offense, but if I decide to pardon or keep him, then how can anyone object? I was fortunate enough to sit at Srila Prabhupada's lotus feet for thirteen years. I observed him in everything he did. I saw how he forgave. So let us not make mountains out of molehills. Many blessings on you all! May you all be successful in devotional service!

The dangers of caste pride

Some of my disciples have many virtues, and their qualifications are a great asset to our mission. I wish I were better able to help them. Some other disciples, on the other hand, seem to have gone off in a different direction. They may also have many good qualities, know English, or speak well, but they make some important errors. One such disciple joined our mission for a while, but was very independentminded. The Vaishnava religion is centered on obedience and ānugatya, faithful submission. But this disciple had no sense of ānugatya. He has so many virtues, so many qualities, so many qualifications, but they have all been lost, like ghee poured on ashes. Do you understand this image

of ghee on ashes? This disciple had many good qualities, but he was proud of having been born a brahmin. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said that we have no relation to caste or race—*kṛṣṇa bhajane nāhi jāti-kulādi-vicāra*. And the Chaitanya Bhagavata also says,

jāti kula saba nirarthaka bujhāite janmilena haridāsa adhama kulete

In order to prove to the world that one's caste or family background have no relevance to one's spiritual life, Hari Das took birth in a lowly family. —
Cbh 1.16.237

There is no reason for anyone to judge a devotee because of his or her birth or race. Mahaprabhu and our Prabhupada never judged anyone on such a basis. What was the identification Mahaprabhu gave of Himself?

*nāham vipro na ca narapatir nāpi vaiśyō na śūdro nāham varnī na ca
grhapatir no vanastho yatir vā kintu prodyan-nikhila-paramānanda-
pūrnāmrtābdher gopī-bhartuh pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsah*

“I am not a Brahmin, nor a Kshatriya, nor a Vaishya, nor a Shudra. Neither am I a brahmachari, a householder, a retired man or renunciate monk. My real identity is that I am the most insignificant servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of Krishna, lover of the gopis and overflowing ocean of supreme and immortal joy.” —*CC 2.13.80*

Our only identity is that we are eternal servants of Krishna. Has anyone ever seen the soul? No, but the body has value only when the jivatma, the soul, is present in it. It can be compared to an electric bulb, which only has value when it is connected to the electric current. Without the soul, this body is not worth a single red cent. The soul is present in the body. But the soul is never born.

*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin nāyam bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyah ajo nityah
śāśvato 'yam purāno na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*

For the soul there is neither birth nor death. The soul that is will never cease to be. It is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and primeval. It is not slain when the body is slain. —*Gita 2.21*

The body is destroyed, but the soul is never destroyed. And no one can see the soul, for it is very tiny—too small to ever be seen. The Śvetāśvatara Upanishad (5.9) tells us that,

bālāgra-śata-bhāgasya śatadhā kalpitasya ca bhāgo jīvaḥ sa vijūeyah sa cānantyāya kalpate

The individual soul is the size of the one-hundredth part of the onehundredth part of the tip of a hair, yet it is destined for immortality.

You can make the mathematical calculation. What all this means is that no one has seen the soul. We think that this big body is identical with the self, but it is not so. It is only the presence of the soul in the body that allows it to function. Because if the soul is not present, due to some disease or something, then it is lifeless. Without the soul, the corpse will simply lie there in the morgue. Not even the scientists know where the life has gone. They may inspect the dead body with their microscopes, but they do not know where the life is gone. They only know that it has departed and nothing more. The tiny soul acts like an electric current. While it is present, it animates this big body and makes it function. Its presence causes our heart to beat. All the properties of life present in the human being—intelligence and learning, and whatever else—everything we do and everything we are worth depend on the presence of the soul in the body. Because that thing is present, I am able to receive honors as a sannyasi. Someone else will have some other identity and achievement. And yet it is so small that you cannot even point to it with your finger. So the individual living entity can certainly help advance creation, but as the *Brahma-sūtra* says, *jagad-vyāpāra-varjam*, it cannot directly do the work of creation. Let the atheists produce even a single hair out of nothing. Just let me see someone materialize a little hair. You may be able to make an artificial hair, but can you produce a real hair out of nothing? But if you want to make an artificial hair, you still need the materials that are already present in the creation. And still we are saying, “I am a tiger, I am brahmin, or I am a kshatriya.” But has anybody actually seen the soul? Who is a brahmin? Did Mahaprabhu say, “I am a brahmin”? No. He said, “Nāham vipro— I am not a Brahmin, nor a Kshatriya, nor a Vaishya, nor a Shudra. Neither am I a brahmachari, a householder, a retired man or renunciate monk. I am the servant of the servant of the lover of the gopis. Krishna is the

lover of the gopis, and I am the servant of the servant of His servants.” Why?
Because Krishna says,

*aham sarvasya prabhavo mattah sarvam pravartate matvā bhajante mām budhā
bhāva-samanvitāh*

I am the source of all things.

Everything proceeds from Me. The wise who accept this worship Me with great
feeling. —*Gita 10.7*

The Lord says, *aham sarvasya prabhavah*

—“I am the source of all creation.” The word *prabhavah* means “place of origin.”

—“Everything arises in Me.” This means that our vocations and worldly duties
also have their origin in him. This is why in the Sixth Canto, in the story about
Ajāmila, Lord Yamaraj says to the Yamadutas—

*dharmam tu sāksād bhagavat-pranītam na vai vidur rsayo nāpi devāh na
siddha-mukhyā asurā manusyāh kuto nu vidyādhara-cāranādayah*

Religious duties have been established by God Himself. Thus no one
really knows them in full—not the rishis, demigods, perfected beings, demons
or humans, what to speak of the Vidyadharas or the Charanas. —6.3.18

Then he goes on to say:

*svayambhūr nāradaś śambhuh kumārah kapilo manuh prahlādo janako
bhīsmo balir vaiyāsakir vayam dvādaśaite vijānīmo dharmam bhāgavatam
bhatāh guhyam viśuddham durbodham yam jñātvāmrtam aśnute*

There are twelve of us who do know the religious duties prescribed by the Lord,

the Bhagavata Dharma. We are Brahma, Narada, Shiva, the four Kumaras, Kapila, Manu, Prahlad, Janaka, Bhishma, Bali, Shuka and myself. Anyone who understands this secret, pure and mysterious teaching will attain immortality. — SB 6.3.19-21

So we are calling this substance “a Brahmin,” or “a Kshatriya.” But in fact, depending on where it goes, this same soul may become a snake and want to bite you, or become a tiger and want to eat you. Depending on the laws of karma, it takes a particular body. But these identities have no real value; our real identity is to be the servant of the servant of the lover of the gopis. This is the identity that Mahaprabhu taught us to accept.

Eyes but no eyes

Some people have no eyes to see. I remember in my childhood, we had this saying, “Eyes but no eyes.” Once we met a boy who had come from out of town. We asked him, “How did you get here?” He answered, “I came by boat.” We asked, “Which boat?” “The rice boat.” “What kind of rice?” He couldn’t answer, and so he went back to take a look. We all thought it was funny because it was as though he had “eyes but no eyes.” An intelligent person looks and immediately makes all the necessary inquiries to find out whatever he needs to know. He will ask, “What boat is this? Is it a rice boat? What kind of rice is it carrying?” He will find out the answers to all these questions. The “eyes but no eyes” people, on the other hand, will come on a boat, but will not observe anything about what kind of boat it is. Then, when it’s time to go back, they won’t be able to recognize which boat they have to take. They won’t even know what questions to ask in order to find out.

Serving *the* cows

There is a mantra for the worship of the cows. There is a mantra for herding the cows. Krishna was a cowherd; that is why He has names like Gopal and Govinda. Krishna protected all the cows, Himself. He and His friends would shout, “Hoy, hoy” at the cows to make them go in the direction they wanted. I have often said no one should think that serving the cows is an ordinary kind of job. There is a very famous pandit in Vrindavan—I even have some of his books here—Haridas Shastri. He gave up everything to serve the cows. If we can serve the cows then we will give pleasure to Krishna. We have an expression—*go-manyu*. *Manyu* means anger. If the cows are displeased with our behavior, then there will be inauspiciousness in the household.

All the gods dwell in the heart of the cow; that is why she is called *sarva-deva-maya*.

This is why I say that service to the cows is not a commonplace activity. One of Krishna’s names is Gopal. This is a special aspect of Krishna’s pastime. He has so many cows, black ones, white ones. There are seven notes on the scale that Krishna plays on His flute—*sā, re, gā, mā, pā, dhā* and *nī*.

So when He plays *sā*, then all the *śyāmali* or black cows would come running. They come up to Him and start licking Him and He would rub and scratch them. When Krishna left for Mathura, the cows completely lost their appetite. They stopped eating altogether. The mothers of the cowherd boys said to their sons—Sudama’s and Sridama’s mothers said to them, “Go and take the cows out to graze a little. Eat a little something yourselves and then go.” Then they answered, “Mother, we stopped feeling hunger and thirst the day that our brother Kanai left us. You’re telling us to take the cows into the fields, but they won’t even look at the grass. They simply look up and moo for our brother Kanai to come back. Tears pour out of their eyes in torrents. That is the state the cows are in.” Krishna’s friends go on, “And what will we eat? We cannot feel either thirst or hunger.” Everyone is feeling the same way.

Mother Yashoda’s kitchen

And what can we say about Mother Yashoda? She goes through life with her eyes closed, saying that she will only open them again when her Gopal

comes back. Otherwise, she refuses to open her eyes. What to speak of eating! Sometimes the neighbors come with buttermilk or something, but she just takes one look at it and immediately feels nauseous. When Uddhava came to Vraja, then Nanda and Yashoda's neighbors brought some sweet rice to feed him. Mother Yashoda's kitchen is described in the Bhagavatam—*lūtā- tantu* (SB 10.46.15 Vishwanath's commentary). The word *lūtā-tantu* means cobwebs.

So the whole kitchen was filled with cobwebs. Nobody had made any effort to sweep or clean it. This was the very kitchen where Radharani and Her friends had worked day and night to cook for Krishna. In this world, we say I have already cooked once today, I am not going to cook again, but Radharani works so constantly that the water never dries on Her hands. Radharani once told Purnamasi during the Surya puja that she had received a boon from Durvasa. Purnamasi in turn told Mother Yashoda. "Listen, Yashoda, Radharani has received a boon from Durvasa that anyone who eats her cooking will live a long life." Mother Yashoda says, "Radha is like a member of the family." Kundalata, go and fetch Radharani." By personally sending for Radharani like that, Yashoda makes it clear how important she is. Otherwise, Jatila and Kutila would simply complain and make trouble. Radharani Herself says, "I am a chaste housewife, so how can I go to another man's house to cook?" But Jatila and Kutila know that Yashoda is the queen of Vraja, so how can they refuse? Jatila is Radharani's mother-in-law and Kutila is her sister-in-law. They say to Radharani, "Go, daughter-in-law. If Queen Yashoda has sent for you, then you should go." In this way they give Her their permission. In the meantime, Mother Yashoda is waiting for Radha expectantly. As soon as Radha arrives, she immediately comes to greet Her, covering Her face with kisses. "My child, go quickly into the kitchen. All your friends have already arrived and are waiting for you there. Lalita, Visakha, Chitra, Champakalata—they are all waiting for you. They have brought everything you need for cooking. So go quickly to join them." Radha is the embodiment of all the Goddesses of Fortune, so how long would it take Her to finish cooking a great feast? When the meal is ready, Mother Yashoda sits down while Rohini Devi serves. Krishna and His friends are sitting in rows. Krishna is directing, "Put more on this plate; put more on that one." Madhumangala is making noises with his hand in his armpit and calling out "Haribol!" He says, "Brother Krishna! Look over here at this wonderful arrangement." But as soon as Krishna turns to see what he is pointing at, Madhumangala steals a laddu from His plate. It is in this joyous atmosphere that Krishna is eating. Throughout the meal, Radharani is standing off to one side, watching. She is too shy to come out in front of the elders. In order to tease Her, Krishna says, "Who on earth has done the cooking today? Everything taste really bitter." Radharani becomes so embarrassed that She cannot look at him. After the cooking and feasting are finished, Radharani gets Krishna's

prasad. And Her girlfriends take Her remnants. Somewhere along the line, She learns where and when she and Krishna should meet. They decide to see each other at Radha Kund. The sakhis will take Radharani there. So that night, She rushes to the meeting place. Meanwhile, Yashoda puts Krishna to bed. Yogamaya then bewilders everyone so that nobody can know that they are meeting. Yogamaya is the master of ceremonies of Krishna's lila. When Radharani goes out to meet Krishna, that is called abhisar. She runs toward their trysting place like a madwoman and arrives there in a few minutes. As she runs, the roots and weeds that grow on the forest floor scratch her feet, but she notices nothing. What an amazing state of being! This is why Uddhava prays to take birth as a blade of grass in Vrindavan, so that he could perfect his life by being trampled under Radharani's feet as she speeds to her meeting place with Krishna, in a state of complete forgetfulness in love. This is Uddhava's prayer—it's not an easy thing to understand. Another time, Mother Yashoda had set aside a large chest of jewelry to give to Radharani. So what did Krishna do? He took all the jewelry and ornaments out of the chest and hid inside it. That night, Ayan Ghosh, Radha's husband, carried it on his head, bringing it home to his wife. Radha and Her sakhis looked at the chest and opened it eagerly, thinking that there were jewels inside. But, what a surprise! Krishna popped out and everyone burst into laughter. They took off the lid and they saw Krishna. Of course they were all astonished! These are some of Krishna's pastimes that our Goswamis relished.

☐ Is it right to say *that* all religions *are the same*? ☐

by Srila Bhakti Bibudha Bodhayan Maharaj

Everything about Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur Prabhupada, the founder of the Brahma Madhva Gaudiya Saraswata spiritual family and my param guru—his birthplace, the moment of his birth, his family background—all point to his being an extraordinarily powerful personality, an intimate associate of the daughter of Vrishabhanu, Srimati Radharani. The scripture states, hy utkale purusottamāt—a great personality would appear in Purushottam Dham, Jagannath Puri, to deliver the people of the world. Srila

Prabhupada was the embodiment of the Lord's mercy who appeared in order to fulfill this prophecy.



At the time of Srila Prabhupada's appearance, many religious slogans were in vogue. Though these lacked any substance, they managed to appeal to the society of the day. People came to think that such slogans could lead to real fulfillment in life. The most striking example is the Bengali phrase *jata mata tata patha*—"There are as many ways to God as there are opinions." This little slogan has had a great deal of success in Bengal where it has influenced everyone from the most educated and influential to the most illiterate and powerless. The person who coined this phrase has come to be considered an incarnation of God by those who are entirely ignorant of scripture. And who would be so bold as to contradict the words of "God Himself"? Only one who is a true messenger of God, or who has received the Lord's mercy, can look at an expression such as this one and see the emptiness and baselessness in it. Not only that, but such a divine representative can use the statements of scripture to convince the intelligent that it is so. His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Prabhupada was such a messenger. His argument against religious relativism went as follows: The word *mata* means "opinion." Opinions are the work of the mind. There is a saying, *bhinna-rucir hi lokah*.^{1[5]}—"To each his own." There are countless numbers of people with countless whims and countless fancies. The world is full of religious systems that are based on such whims and fancies, but the emperor of all revealed scriptures, the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, tells us—

*sa vai pumsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhoksaje ahaituky
apratihatā yayātmā suprasīdati*

The supreme religious activity of the human being is that which results in devotion to the Lord who is beyond our material senses. This devotion must be without motivation and uninterrupted, for only then will it bring full contentment to the soul. —SB 1.2.6

Those in this world who say that one opinion is as good as any other should be reminded that all opinions are the result of empirical knowledge and are products

of the mind. The so-called religious paths derived from these speculations are thus bound by this world.

The Lord, however, is beyond our material sense perception, and unmotivated and uninterrupted devotion to Him is the only religious duty of every living entity. This is the eternal activity of the soul and the only means through which it finds perfect satisfaction. Whatever other opinions or spiritual paths one may adopt in the name of finding peace and happiness, even though one may think of them as leading to the ultimate good, are all on the bodily or mental platform. If it were true that everything is relative, and that what one person believes is as good as the next, then we would have to eliminate words like “test” from the dictionary. Wherever there is a test, there is someone doing the testing. If a student decides that he does not want to follow the examiner’s directions, then he will never get a passing grade. In the test of life, it is the Supreme Lord who examines every one of us.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna instructs Arjuna—*sarva- dharmān parityājya mām ekam śaranam vraja*

—“Give up all religious duties and take shelter of Me alone.” Taking shelter of Krishna consists of six states of consciousness— humility, self-surrender, accepting God as one’s maintainer, firm faith in God’s protection from danger, a tendency to seek out anything that is favorable to God-consciousness and a rejection of anything that is unfavorable as if it were as dangerous as a bolt of lightning. This process of taking shelter of Krishna is called *śaranāgati*, and unless we adopt it, He will not hear our prayers. On the other hand, if we adopt the relativist position and treat God as a puppet that we can manipulate as we like, acting whimsically and then labeling our activities a “spiritual path,” we are like students who answer the examination questions according to our own whim. Everyone knows that if you answer in a way that goes against the directions given by the examiner you won’t get a passing grade. No one willingly fails the test of life. Everyone wants to pass, but in order to do so, we must know the examiner’s will and follow his directions. Otherwise, we are all completely free to do as we like in a world where there are no moral absolutes. The sovereign of all scriptures, the Srimad Bhagavatam, tells us clearly that there is only one way to reach God. That is the path of devotion, and all other paths like selfless service, the philosophical search, and yogic self-discipline and meditation, are only capable of achieving results when practiced in combination with devotional service. Devotion or bhakti thus encompasses all other spiritual paths. In order to show how this is true, we may give the following example: The human body has nine gates. The body’s center is the digestive system. Even though all of these nine gates are in some way connected to the stomach, if one is hungry, one

normally places one's food in the mouth. This is the most natural and easy way of doing things, and if we try to use one of the other gates, we should expect more trouble than success. Once the food has been processed by the digestive system, its nutrients are extracted and sent to the various parts of the body to give them strength. Now if we compare the mouth and esophagus to the devotional path, and if we consider the stomach to be comparable to the ultimate goal of human life, namely Goloka, then it is clear that just as the mouth is the only appropriate route for foodstuffs to take to serve the stomach, so the only way for service to reach Goloka is by means of the devotional path. You cannot say that any old gate will do. In the same way, the idea that one can reach God by any path one chooses is also false. As Srila Prabhupada's grand-disciple, I humbly pray that he free me from the error of relativism. May he engage me on the path of devotion and take me to the ultimate goal of human life—the service of the Supreme Lord. May he give me the qualification to enter into the spiritual world of Goloka and render direct service to the Divine Couple of Sri Sri Radha Gopinath and make my life as a human being successful. All glories to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur Prabhupada, the origin of the worldwide movement to spread pure devotional service!

[1] 1Pramāda has a number of related meanings: “intoxication; madness; carelessness or inattention: error.” Inattentive chanting sows the seeds of anarthas which soon develop in the heart.

[2] 2Beginners should engage in meditation in a group with other devotees. The group energy strengthens concentration in the early going. As one progresses, the presence of others may disrupt one's concentration, however. Householders should designate a specific portion of the household as a meditation center, creating an atmosphere conducive to remembering the Holy Name. If possible, a Tulasi plant should be present there.

[3] No information in original book

[4] No information in original book

[5] No information in original book